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Contextualising Individual Diversity Perceptions: A Relational Study across Egypt, Germany, and the United Kingdom Technology Industries

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Contextualising Individual Diversity Perceptions: A Relational Study across Egypt, Germany, and the United Kingdom Technology Industries.

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Abstract

For this research, the influence of context on individual diversity perceptions was investigated. A relational approach was adopted to account for the influence of national culture, industry, organisation and identity on diversity perceptions. Current diversity literature has been criticised for being decontextualized and for not considering intersections between diversity dimensions. The dynamic and contextual nature of diversity has been, to a great extent, disregarded. Critical diversity studies call for a revitalisation of diversity research through comparative, contextual and intersectional research, which is the focus of this research. To preserve the context-specific nature of the diversity construct, a qualitative social constructionism epistemology was adopted. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted with a total of 68 employees in the technology industry across three countries: Egypt, Germany and the United Kingdom. At the macro level, national culture was accounted for using Hofstede's cultural dimensions, cultural tightness-looseness theory and the World Values Survey. At the meso level, industry diversity dynamics and organisational diversity management were considered. At the micro individual level, identity was theoretically conceptualised through social identity theory, professional role identity and intersectionality.

Findings have shown that perceived diversity is individually unique and is shaped by the interaction of the multiple contexts individuals exist within, as well as their social and professional identities. National culture has been shown to influence the diversity discourse, taboo topics, gender dynamics and individual diversity attitudes. The research has shown that in Egypt, individual diversity attitudes were avoidance and apprehension. In Germany, individual diversity attitudes were pragmatism and avoidance, and in the UK, individual diversity attitudes were evasiveness and simplification. The industry and organisation contexts have been found to influence individual diversity management perceptions. Three reactions to diversity management are proposed: frustration, incomprehension, and cynicism. The empirical study of perceived diversity is a conceptual contribution to knowledge. A framework of the influence of context on diversity perceptions has been proposed. The current study's outcomes, in addition to theory and knowledge contributions, allow for explanations to be provided for diversity management practitioners regarding how employees perceive their diversity policies.

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Dedication

To my mother, Baraka Karin Maatwk.

To the soul of my late father, Abdelhamid Maatwk.

Acknowledgements

My last name, Maatwk مَعْتُوق means free, the befreed, or the released. In the last few weeks before submitting this thesis, I found myself reflecting on the meaning of my name a lot. As intense and emotional as this PhD journey has been, it was a time of liberation, of knowing more about who I am, a time where my comfort zone was stretched beyond my imagination. I want to thank everyone who believed in me, who stood by me, and who supported me during this intense, emotional, and fulfilling PhD journey.

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My father, Abdelhamid Maatwk, passed away while writing his PhD, he never got to finish it, yet he resembles everything that motivated me to write mine. He came from a small village in rural Egypt, today it has a population of only 3516 people. The number was much lower 31 years ago when he passed away. His success to be the first in his family to attend university and continue to pursue his doctorate make me a proud daughter. He finished his undergraduate and postgraduate studies at Ain Shams University in Cairo, and then got a scholarship to conduct his doctoral research in Germany. He came from a very poor family of farmers and his dreams took him around the world. Father, your inspiration has crossed continents, thank you for giving me the inspiration I needed to build my life and cross not just geographic distance, but to also break through emotional and social barriers. During this PhD journey, I made a lot of memories with you, every single time I told your story, you were alive. I hope that you, Hassan, Rose and Batikha know this thesis is dedicated to you.

Declaration

“I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Westminster or any other institution.”

Name: Fatima Maatwk

Signed: _____

List of Abbreviations

BIMA	British Interactive Media Association
CaSE	Campaign for Science and Engineering
CTL	Cultural Tightness Looseness
ECHR	European Commission on Human Rights
EHRC	Equality and Human Rights Commission
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
STEM	Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics
Tech	Technology
UK	United Kingdom
UX	User Experience Design
WVS	World Values Survey

Chapter 1

Thesis Introduction

Introduction

Scholarly literature reveals an extensive research focus on diversity and its management. Yet, despite the vast extant literature on diversity, there is no unified conceptualisation of what constitutes diversity and hence, its meaning is still a matter of debate among scholars (Ahonen, Tienari, Meriläinen, and Pullen, 2014; Cox and Nkomo, 1990; Holvino and Kamp, 2009). Specifically, there is little agreement on which differences should be included in the diversity concept (e.g. demographic differences such as age, gender, religion, ethnicity, or job related diversity such as education, tenure and professional background), and thus on what the focus should be in diversity research and diversity practice (Pringle, Konrad and Prasad, 2006). In addition to this lack of agreement, the consideration of the context-specific meaning of diversity is generally disregarded in mainstream diversity research (Linnehan and Konrad, 1999; Siebers, 2009; Zanoni *et al.*, 2010; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012; Knights and Omanović, 2016). This research is motivated by the above two phenomena: the shortcomings of diversity conceptualisations and the dearth of contextualised diversity research. This work involves investigating individual diversity perceptions by situating these in the contextual layers they are embedded within: country, industry, organisation and the individual profession. This first chapter provides an introduction to the research. It lays out the motivation for undertaking it, the rationale shaping the research process, the key objectives, research questions, and the selected methodology and methods. The chapter concludes with presentation of the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Research Impetus and Significance

Diversity is about differences between individuals and groups (Qin, Muenjohn and Chhetri, 2014). It encompasses the multiple social and cultural personal attributes which characterise individuals (Cox, 2001). Despite the evident evolution of diversity (from regulatory, research and managerial perspectives), robust meaning and understanding of diversity at the workplace is still debated upon among scholars (Ahonen, Tienari, Meriläinen, and Pullen, 2014; Cox and Nkomo, 1990; Holvino and Kamp, 2009). Researchers are thus faced with the challenge of developing a workable conceptual framework of what diversity is in order to conduct effective research (Harrison and Klein, 2007). The extant diversity literature offers an extensive range of diversity conceptualisations based on the categorisation of diversity dimensions. This is

often done according to the level of visibility of diversity of dimensions: surface-level or high visibility (gender, age, race and ethnicity) and deep-level or low visibility dimensions (education, sexuality, professional background, nationality and tenure) (Harrison, Price, Gavin, and Florey, 2002; Milliken and Martins, 1996; Mor Barak *et al.*, 2016; Phillips, Northcraft, and Neale, 2006). Nonetheless, despite extant research and the various conceptualisations of diversity, scholars do not fully agree on which dimensions are to be included in a diversity definition (Pringle, Konrad and Prasad, 2006). In sum, the question of what diversity means in the context of a workplace and how it is to be conceptualised is still open to debate.

The lack of agreement on a diversity definition and the limitations of its conceptualisations are not the only criticisms directed at mainstream diversity literature. In particular, the disregard of context and lack of intersectionality between diversity dimensions are hotly debated. In general, contextualisation of management research has been widely called for (Roberts, Hulin and Rousseau, 1979; Cappelli and Sherer, 1991; Johns, 2006; Bamberger, 2008). Regarding diversity, scholars have been calling for research that can inform how contextual factors impact on diversity outcomes in teams (Van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007; Joshi and Roh, 2009, 2013; Özbilgin *et al.*, 2013; Öztürk *et al.*, 2015). Disregarding context in diversity research results in an incomplete understanding of how individuals experience inequality, especially when historical and socio-economic factors shaping power relations in a particular context are not acknowledged (Zanoni *et al.*, 2010; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012; Knights and Omanović, 2015). In particular, contextualisation of diversity research is necessary to address questions surrounding the effectiveness of diversity management policies (Johns, 2006; Bamberger, 2008; Joshi and Roh, 2009). Moreover, diversity research is frequently criticised for disregarding intersectional relations and interdependencies between diversity dimensions. That is, researchers often disregard intersectionality and instead, focus on diversity dimensions the significance of which has already been pre-established by other scholars (Zander *et al.*, 2010; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012; Hearn and Louvrier, 2015). Disregarding intersectionality of diversity dimensions further adds to the degree to which research is decontextualized, thus reinforcing a false sense of universalism (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). Intersectionality research involves investigating how different strands of diversity (e.g. age, gender, ethnic background, class, etc.) interplay to create a complex experience of inequality that is, thus, rarely based on a single isolated diversity strand (e.g. Duncan and Loretto, 2004; Goldberg *et al.*, 2004; Acker, 2006; Hancock, 2007; Griffiths and Moore, 2010; Griffith, 2012). Under the intersectionality

lens, the focus is on the investigation of the multiplicity of inequality an individual is subjected to, based on the numerous identities they hold (Crenshaw, 1991; Mccall, 2005; Zander *et al.*, 2010). In sum, integrating intersectionality into diversity research is necessary for exploring how individuals experience their own identities in light of inequalities they face (Mercer *et al*., 2015).

This research is fuelled by both the theoretical considerations discussed above, as well as by personal considerations of the researcher. The researcher's Egyptian and German bi-national roots, as well as her professional experience in international development cooperation between these two countries, have motivated her to research how diversity impacts workplace relationships. As such, her decision was to research diversity comparatively and to include Egypt and Germany, her home countries, as well as the United Kingdom, where she lives. Hence, her background, having lived, studied, and worked in all three countries included in the research, enriches the research's insights. The researcher selected the technology industry to set her research in for several reasons. The unique diversity related dynamics of the industry offer an interesting setting to study diversity, as discussed in several sections throughout the thesis. The organisations of the technology industry work across countries, with numerous organisations working in the three countries included in the research. This further motivated the selection of the technology industry. Additionally, the researcher has no previous working experience in the industry, which decreased any potential researcher bias. A reflexive account of her role as a researcher is included in the methodology chapter of the thesis.

The focus of this research is on individual diversity perceptions, which means investigating how individuals form their understanding of diversity. To address the abovementioned aspects regarding diversity, several steps are undertaken. The first step considers the conceptualisation of diversity. Moving away from predetermined, often positivistic, understandings of diversity, individual perceptions of diversity are explored. This involves addressing questions of how individuals construct their perceptions of diversity in relation to the multiple layers of context they exist within. The investigation of diversity from an individual perception perspective allows for uncovering the dynamic and context-specific nature of the construct (Shemla *et al.*, 2016) as well as the subjectivity of diversity, to be considered (Harrison *et al.*, 2002; van Knippenberg *et al.*, 2004; Mor Barak, 2016). Diversity is, thus, considered a construct that encompasses multiple dimensions (Qin, Muenjohn and Chhetri, 2014) and individuals are

considered as being whole, with the multiple identities they hold acknowledged (Frable, 1997). The saliency of diversity dimensions, according to the perceptual approach, is related to their perception as salient by individuals (Hobman, Bordia and Gallois, 2003; Van der Vegt and Van de Vliert, 2005; Shemla *et al.*, 2016). This research, hence, involves exploring what individuals consider salient in terms of their perception of diversity, instead of making the presumption of there being a pre-existing definition of what it is.

The second step relates to the contextualisation of research. There has been little research that has bridged several levels of analysis: individual, group/team/unit and organisation (Joshi, Liao and Roh, 2011).To advance both diversity research and diversity management practices, contextual research, which considers international, national, sectoral, organisational and individual contextual factors is essential (Özbilgin, Tatli and Jonsen, 2015). To contextualise research appropriately, a relational approach to investigating diversity perceptions is adopted. This accounts for the interplay and intersubjectivity between individual perceptions and organisational phenomena (Özbilgin, 2006), thereby further challenging the ethnocentrism of mainstream diversity research (Nishii and Özbilgin, 2007; Syed and Özbilgin, 2009). Hence, in line with several relational diversity studies (i.e. Syed and Özbilgin, 2009; Syed, Burke and Acar, 2010; Hennekam, Tahssain-Gay and Syed, 2017; Syed and Ali, 2019), in this research, four layers of context are investigated: national culture, industry, organisational and individual identity contexts.

With the majority of diversity research having been focused on the US and Western European countries, there is a dearth of literature on diversity and its management in the Middle East (Syed, Burke, and Acar, 2010). In order to enrich comparative diversity research, as well as address the scarcity of it in non-Western contexts, for this research, Egypt, Germany and the United Kingdom are included as national contexts in this research. Specifically, at the macro level, the influence of national culture on diversity perceptions is explored. To contextualise the research from a national culture perspective, several theoretical approaches to comparing cultures are integrated. These include the World Values Survey, which compares cultures in terms of values, such as secularism, self-expression and rationality (Inglehart and Welzel, 2010). Secondly, the cultural tightness-looseness theory is adopted to account for the degree to which social values and traditions are strict or allow for some deviation (Jackson, Gelfand and Ember, 2019). In addition, Hofstede's dimensions of power distance, masculinity versus

femininity, uncertainty avoidance and individualism versus collectivism are considered (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov, 2010). Finally, country-specific socio-cultural, historical and contemporary political issues are considered by offering a profile for each country to guide the analysis. Relying on several approaches to contextualise culture and accounting for contemporary issues shaping each country's diversity discourse, ensures capturing cultural changes over time. It also provides a more realistic and complete analysis of how cultural context influences diversity perceptions at the individual level (Hennekam and Tahssain-Gay, 2015).

The meso level of context in this research encompasses both the industry and organisational aspects. Industries are characterised by different diversity dynamics, especially with regards to gender and representation of ethnic minorities. This study is situated within the technology industry, which offers fertile ground for the study of diversity, as diversity is challenged in several ways. Recent research has shown that, for instance, ethnic minority employees in the technology industry are exposed to severe mental health stress and anxiety (BIMA, 2019). Gender, ethnicity, disability and class are salient diversity issues in the technology sector (CASE, 2014). Furthermore, how the cultural context influences the experiences of women in this sector is under-researched (Saifuddin, Dyke and Hossain, 2019). Finally, research on the construction of identities in technology or STEM related employment has confirmed the relevance of acknowledging industry context in diversity research. For example, gender has been the focus of research, which has recognised the influence of the masculinity associated with engineering work on women employed in the industry (Adam et al., 2006; Cech, 2015; Hatmaker, 2013; Jorgenson, 2002). In addition to gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation have also been studied in terms of how they influence identity construction processes in the technology industry and education (Hughes, 2017; Trauth *et al.*, 2012). Investigating diversity perceptions situated in the technology industry will inform both diversity research and practice.

The organisational context is explored as a second layer of the meso level context. Organisations are herein considered social control systems which influence individual behaviours (Chuang, Church and Zikic, 2004). An organisation's perceived diversity climate reflects the degree to which employees believe that it embraces diversity through its structures, values and the representation of minority groups (Dwertmann, Nishii and van Knippenberg,

2016). In particular, organisational practices relating to human resources management and diversity management are linked to its perception as being inclusive by its employees (Shore, Cleveland and Sanchez, 2018). Working systems that simultaneously ensure equal treatment and the appreciation of difference are perceived as inclusive (Janssens and Zanoni, 2008). However, despite the extant research on diversity management practices, there has been scant scholarship on employee perceptions of these (Otaye-Ebede, 2018). Individual perceptions of diversity management and their reactions to these in their organisations, are thus explored at the meso level for this thesis.

Finally, the individual identity context is explored at the micro level of analysis. A social psychology perspective is adopted, such that identity is explored in terms of social identity, role identity and intersectionality of identity strands. Social identity theory offers insights into how individuals construct their identities based on conscious knowledge about belonging to certain social groups and the resulting feelings and connotations associated with these memberships (Roberts and Creary, 2013). Relating social psychology to diversity, researchers focus on the intrapersonal level, analysing how cognitive processes influence experiences with and reactions to others (Roberson, 2013). According to social identity theory, certain dimensions of diversity (e.g. nationality, ethnicity, gender) are the basis for self-definition for individuals, which is a part of the self-concept (Hogg, Terry and White, 1995). In this sense, the essence of identity is about who a person is (Brown, 2015). The professional role identity lens is adopted to account for diversity dimensions relating to individuals' professions. Professional or role identities are anchored in the professional role of the individual; what a person does and the characteristics associated with this professional role (López-Facal and Jiménez-Aleixandre, 2009; Ybema *et al.*, 2009; Brown, 2015). Integrating both theories allows for consideration of diversity dimensions based on which self-categorisation and formation of in- and out-groups takes place, both in work and social contexts. Finally, intersectionality of diversity dimensions are considered at the individual level and thus, the unidimensional and decontextualized conceptualisation of identity is challenged (Del Toro and Yoshikawa, 2016). Integrating intersectionality into the social psychology research of identity, has been called for by social psychology researchers (Parent, DeBlaere and Moradi, 2013; Taksa, Powell and Jayasinghe, 2016), these two lenses have however, not been often integrated in diversity research. As such, this research integrates identity theories and intersectionality for the individual level analysis.

Based on the above argumentation, for this research, diversity perceptions are conceptualised by adopting a relational approach that considers: national culture, industry dynamics, organisational context, social identities, role identity and intersectionality. The research offers a unique perspective on how diversity is constructed by individuals and how various levels of context shape these constructions. In sum, it contributes conceptually to diversity research, with the fieldwork offering valuable insights for practitioners by providing understanding regarding how different contextual levels impact on the perception of diversity management in the workplace.

1.2 Research Aim

To address the issues outlined above, a social constructionism lens is adopted to explore diversity perceptions among employees of the technology industry in Egypt, Germany and the United Kingdom. This investigation of individual diversity perceptions is undertaken by:

1. Conducting qualitative research that allows for the salient diversity aspects to emerge and ensures in-depth context-specific analysis of the concept for each layer of context;
2. Following an inductive knowledge creation approach to avoid the assumption of a universal understanding of diversity;
3. Conducting the research in a cross-cultural setting that involves comparing three countries and thus, the influence of national culture on diversity will be uncovered;
4. Focusing the research on a specific industry and global organisations operating in one or several of the research countries, thereby capturing the essence of diversity as being situated in the industry setting;
5. Accounting for the multiple identities held by the individual participants of the research as well as the intersectionality between them.

The main research question to address is: how individual diversity perceptions are formed? And how they are influenced by the multiple contexts individuals are situated within? To this end, the research aim guiding this study is:

> To conceptualise diversity perceptions of employees in the technology industry in Egypt, Germany and the United Kingdom through the exploration of the relational influences of context at the levels of: country, industry, organisation and identity.

In-depth qualitative data was collected from 68 employees of international technology organisations in Egypt, Germany and the United Kingdom. The social constructionism underpinning of research is inclusive of the multiple context-specific socio-demographic identities individuals hold and it is acknowledged that these are constantly produced and reproduced by individuals (Zanoni *et al.,* 2010). In essence, under social constructionism, it is presumed that reality and meaning are constructed through the social interactions of individuals and thus, they create meaning based on their social contexts, which can vary over time (Saunders *et al.,* 2016). Semi-structured in-depth interviews were selected as the data collection method, which allowed for the researcher to gain deep insights into individual experiences and perceptions (Evans, 2017). Overall, three studies were conducted for this data collection. The rationale, participants and further details of each study are discussed in-depth in the methodological chapter (chapter 5).

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis consists of three parts divided into nine chapters in total. This first chapter offers an overview of the rationale underlying the research and its significance, a brief summary of the research methodology, research objectives and concludes with presenting the structure of the thesis. The first part consists of chapters two and three, covering existing literature that constitutes the theoretical foundations of this work. **Chapter two**, first, reviews literature on diversity in terms of its development, meaning and various conceptualisations. This is followed by a discussion of the significance of context for diversity research. The chapter then discusses the significance of each of the national culture context, industry context, and organisational context, respectively.

Chapter three provides an overview of the social psychology literature relevant for studying identity construction as the basis for perceived diversity. The discussion, thus, focuses on Social Identity Theory and related dynamics, including self-categorisation and group formation. Identity construction is further considered in terms of the psychological needs that influence individuals in forming their identities. Professional role identities are discussed, in general and in relation to engineering/technology related work, in particular. Finally, the concept of intersectionality is introduced in terms of explaining its fit for context specific diversity research.

The second part of the thesis contains the research's methodological considerations and consists of chapters four and five. **Chapter four** bridges the theoretical research foundations and the empirical part of research by presenting both the conceptual framework guiding the data analysis along with the research questions and objectives. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the rationale for the adopted relational approach and illustrates how each level of context is conceptualised.

Chapter five covers the philosophical underpinnings of the interpretivist, social constructionist approach and details the methods adopted to undertake the research. The chapter starts with justification for the suitability of a qualitative methodology over a quantitative one, for fulfilling the aims of this research, with the key methodological trends in diversity research also being discussed. This is followed by in-depth discussion on the ontological and epistemological stances adopted. The research strategy section discusses the research design,

in terms of: the data collection method (semi-structured in-depth interviews), studies undertaken, sampling of participants and the thematic approach to the analysis. Finally, ethical considerations, research credibility and trustworthiness, as well as the reflexive role of the researcher are also addressed in this chapter.

The third part of the thesis presents the empirical investigation and consists of four chapters: chapters six, seven, and eight include the data analysis, whilst chapter nine concludes with discussion and explanation of the contributions to knowledge. **Chapter six** identifies the influence of context on diversity perceptions at the national culture level. The chapter first applies the selected theoretical lenses to each of Egypt, Germany and the United Kingdom. Secondly, the empirical findings for each country are discussed. It concludes with showing the contextual experience of gender across the different national cultural contexts. That is, the different gender dynamics that emerged from the data in Egypt, as a Middle Eastern country and Germany and the UK as Western European ones, are compared.

Chapter seven analyses diversity perceptions at the meso level by identifying how industry dynamics and organisational context influence individual level diversity perceptions. First, the research context is defined by presenting key details on diversity management in the technology industry and then, the diversity management initiatives of organisations included in the research are set out. This is followed by a critical discussion of the diversity management perceptions at the industry/organisational level.

Chapter eight discusses identity construction processes and situates the findings in relation to social psychology theories adopted for the research. The chapter identifies key elements shaping identity formation and interprets them in terms of social identity theory as well as professional role identity. An intersectional analysis of diversity perceptions is undertaken by showcasing the experience of four women participants to illustrate their different experiences of diversity in their individual contexts.

Finally, **chapter nine** concludes with a discussion on the influence of context on diversity perceptions. It summarises the key theoretical contributions of the thesis and offers future research recommendations as well as implications for diversity management practices. The chapter concludes with final reflections on the research.

Part One: Theoretical Considerations

Chapter 2: A Review of Diversity Literature

Introduction to the Chapter

Whilst diversity and its management have been extensively researched in several fields (i.e. management, social psychology, feminist studies, cultural studies), the necessity of revitalising the field by contextualising diversity research still stands. A review of the literature shows that the dynamic and contextual nature of diversity is often disregarded in the research. Equally ignored is the intersectionality between diversity dimensions. Despite the evident development of the diversity field, defining it remains a complex task, with the suggested definitions almost being as diverse as the subject itself (cf. April and Shockley, 2006). This chapter reviews the development and construction of diversity and consists of two parts. It starts by reviewing published scholarly literature on diversity as a concept in terms of its various conceptualisations, definitions and dimensions. This is followed by a discussion on organisational diversity management. The section concludes with a brief overview of scholarly discussions on the necessity of a revised conceptualisation of diversity in order to advance its management practices. In the second section, the contexts in which diversity and its management are situated are discussed, namely: the country, the industry and the organisation.

2.1 Development of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The development of diversity management, inclusion and inclusive organisational cultures has legislative origins, but mainly in Western countries (Ashkanasy et al., 2002). In particular, the equal pay act issued in 1963 by the United States government and the subsequent civil rights act in 1964, mark the start of managerial consideration of diversity (Jonsen and Özbilgin, 2014). Both acts addressed a specific dimension of diversity, namely gender and ethnicity, respectively, focusing on issues including pay gaps and representation in the workforce (Bell, Marquardt and Berry, 2014). Maltbia and Power (2009) chronicled the development of diversity as: the 1950s and 1960s, which were considered the Civil Rights Era, triggered by minority groups and women expressing their dissatisfaction with injustice and inequality. Organisations were, thus, forced to acknowledge inequality structures in their systems. The 1970s shaped the era of Affirmative Action (AA) and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO). This shift in focus mainly took place due to increasing lawsuits involving discrimination, which led to organisations being more proactive (Maltbia and Power, 2009). The EEO's assumption of 'sameness', meaning that "*equality of opportunity is possible if people with the same*

abilities, or who perform in the same way, are given equal access to jobs, rewards and employment benefits, regardless of social group membership." (Lorbiecki and Jack, 2000, p. 24), raised the essence of diversity and inclusion, which is based on differences. However, the affirmative action and equal opportunity approach to eradicate discrimination was deemed ineffective (Herring and Henderson, 2011), which marked the transition to the era of valuing diversity.

During the 1980s era of *Valuing Diversity*, organisations started to advocate for the value of a diverse workforce and diversity was addressed from the ethical perspective of appreciating human differences (Gardenswartz and Rowe, 1993; Maltbia and Power, 2009). Based on a perceived gap in skills and experiences needed to maintain competitiveness (Maltbia and Power, 2009), organisations adopted training programmes aimed at valuing diversity (Herring and Henderson, 2011). Despite the intended change to organisations, ethnic minorities and women still felt a restriction to their behaviours and a pressure to fit in. A strategic approach to diversity management thus crystallised, leading to the 1990s era of managing diversity (Maltbia and Power, 2009). The key difference to the previous eras of equality was a shift from the focus on visible diversity, such as race and gender, to other less visible aspects, such as religion, sexuality, disability and age (Bendl, Fleischmann and Walenta, 2008). Since the 2000s, the current wave has considered leveraging diversity, which builds on the previous eras and focuses on the advantages of diversity management on three levels: individual, group and organisational (Maltbia and Power, 2009). Qin *et al.* (2014) similarly summarise the development of diversity in three stages: the equal opportunity and affirmative action stage in the 60s and 70s, the diversity management stage in the 80s and finally, the business case of diversity from the 90s up until the present. The diversity business case, however, imposes high risk for ethnic minority groups by offering a rational justification for discrimination; equality of opportunity is contingent upon the organisational benefit (Noon, 2007). Compared to the United States, the concept of diversity management in Europe is fairly recent, as it only really gained popularity in the late 2000s (Tatli *et al.*, 2012). The European Union has had a significant regulatory influence on organisations operating within its geographical boundaries (Jonsen and Özbilgin, 2014). With the majority of diversity research situated in the US and Western European countries, there is a dearth of literature on it in the Middle East (Syed, Burke, and Acar, 2010). Despite the evident evolution of diversity, the solid meaning and understanding of it is still debated upon among scholars (Ahonen, Tienari, Meriläinen, and

Pullen, 2014; Cox and Nkomo, 1990; Holvino and Kamp, 2009). In the next subsection, diversity definitions and conceptualisations are discussed.

2.1.1 Diversity: Definitions and Conceptualisations

Diversity is essentially about differences between individuals and groups, which can be attributed to a myriad of personal attributes (Qin, Muenjohn and Chhetri, 2014). One of the often cited definitions describes diversity as "*the variation of social and cultural identities among people existing together in a defined employment or market setting*" (Cox, 2001, p. 3). The concept was introduced to highlight the lot of social groups who have historically been excluded (i.e. women, ethnic minorities) from institutions, such as schools, universities and businesses and later, went on to include differences, such as disability and sexuality (Herring and Henderson, 2011). Social and cultural identities refer to personal attachments within groups that significantly influence the individual's life, whereas an employment or market setting can be any group setting from sports to organisational teams (Cox, 2001).

A wider definition of diversity suggests that it includes the following dimensions: "*in addition to race, gender, and physical disabilities, it includes human differences such as culture, lifestyle, age, religion, economic status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, marital status, thought, and geography*" (Childs, 2005, p. 75). Diversity is becoming increasingly the focus of organisational or management studies, with workforce diversity being defined as "*the composition of work units (work group, organization, occupation, establishment or firm) in terms of the cultural or demographic characteristics that are salient and symbolically meaningful in the relationships among group members*" (DiTomaso *et al.*, 2007, p. 474). More recently, Mor Barak (2016) suggested the conceptualisation of workforce diversity as: "… *the division of the workforce into distinction categories that (a) have a perceived commonality within a given cultural or national context, and that (b) impact potentially harmful or beneficial employment outcomes, such as job opportunities, treatment in the workplace, and promotion prospects - irrespective of job-related skills and qualifications*" (Mor Barak, 2016, p. 136). In brief, diversity is about differences between individuals or groups regarding gender, age, religion, culture, sexuality and numerous sociodemographic or cultural aspects (Childs, 2005; Cox, 2001; DiTomaso, Post, and Parks-Yancy, 2007; Mor Barak, 2016).

Despite the various definitions of diversity and the various dimensions researched, there is little consensus in the diversity literature of the differences to be included in the definition or which respective measures for inclusion are appropriate for diversity management practices (Pringle, Konrad and Prasad, 2006). Scholars thus face the challenge of conducting effective research, and developing a solid conceptual framework of what diversity is (Harrison and Klein, 2007). The extant diversity literature offers an extensive range of diversity conceptualisations based on the categorisation of diversity dimensions, which are typically based on visibility, job relatedness and relationship orientation. One of the most adopted categorisations is based on visibility of diversity: the surface-level or high visibility (gender, age, race and ethnicity) and deep-level or low visibility dimensions (education, sexuality, professional background, nationality and tenure) (Harrison, Price, Gavin, and Florey, 2002; Milliken and Martins, 1996; Mor Barak et al., 2016; Phillips, Northcraft, and Neale, 2006). Diversity has further been conceptualised as four interdependent and at times, overlapping facets or categories: workforce diversity, behavioural diversity, structural diversity and business and global diversity (Hubbard, 2004). Van Knippenberg, De Dreu, and Homan (2004) classified diversity dimensions into readily detectable and less observable traits, whereas Pelled (1996) referred to the degree of job-relatedness of diversity dimensions. Further conceptualisations pertain to attributes relating to tasks versus relationships (Jackson, May, and Whitney, 1995) and as being role-related, as opposed to inherent diversity dimensions, which those that are challenging to change (Maznevski, 1994).

Task related diversity includes elements such as organisational and team tenure, education and credentials as well as access to external networks relevant to the task. Relations-oriented visible diversity dimensions include: age, sex, culture, race, ethnicity, political and religious affiliations along with physical features (Jackson *et al.*, 1995). Whilst Hubbard (2004) referred to workforce diversity as group and situational identities of individuals, such as gender, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, family status, and economic background. Finally, diversity dimensions have been categorised into primary (also visible) and secondary dimensions, with the being, but not limited to: age, gender, physical attributes and abilities, ethnicity, sexual orientation and race (Qin *et al.,* 2014).

Behavioural diversity refers to aspects such as working, learning and thinking styles, beliefs and value systems, aspirations and expectations of employees (Hubbard, 2004). Business and

global diversity relates to the international operations of the organisation in terms of diverse customer markets, products and services, as well as diverse working contexts in regard to labour market regulations, business cultures and legal contexts (Hubbard, 2004). Moreover, when exploring underlying or deep-level diversity, the following elements are mentioned: skills and knowledge, such as educational, professional, functional and industrial backgrounds (Milliken and Martin, 1996), length of service and time since entering the organisation, which may result in similar communication patterns among those cohorts with shared employment tenure (Pfeffer, 1985). Task-related underlying diversity entails knowledge, skills, physical and cognitive abilities and experience. Lastly, relations-oriented underlying diversity refers to social ties within the team, personality, attitudes, social status, values and behavioural patterns (Jackson *et al.* 1995). Structural diversity covers aspects related to the organisational system, such as the interactions across organisational hierarchies, functions, and divisions as well as between subsidiaries and parent companies (Hubbard, 2004). Finally, secondary (less visible and more prone to change over time) dimensions of diversity are suggested to include: geographic location, education, income, religious beliefs, professional experience, parental and marital status as well as military experience (Qin *et al.,* 2014). In short, conceptualisations of diversity dimensions include various diversity dimensions. These conceptualisations have categorised dimensions based on their visibility, significance for work, and significance for relationships and group formations.

In addition to the above discussed conceptualisations of diversity, the construct has been studied from an individual perception viewpoint (Qin *et al.,* 2014). Herein, Van Knippenberg et al. (2004, p. 1008) define diversity as the "*differences between individuals on any attributes that may lead to the perception that another person is different from self*". In a similar vein, diversity was defined as "*the compositional distribution of team members on any personal attributes that potentially lead to the perception that team members differ from one another*" (Rico *et al.*, 2007, p. 113). These definitions stress the importance of an individual's perception regarding what differentiates another person from the self. They are used as the working definitions for diversity within the scope of this research.

Despite these strenuous efforts to define, conceptualise and categorise diversity, it has not been fully defined as a concept (Harrison and Klein, 2007). Research on the separation and identification of outcomes of diversity types – primary and secondary – still lacks consensus

(Lambert and Bell, 2013). The fact that individuals are diverse in terms of several attributes at the same time (Rico, Molleman, Sanchez-Manzanares, and Van der Vegt, 2007) has not been properly explored, as yet (Qin *et al.,* 2014). There is general agreement among researchers regarding the lack of understanding of diversity. Continued research on what constitutes diversity and an in-depth understanding of both psychological and social processes that shape diversity-related phenomena are called for (Lambert and Bell, 2013). Specifically, the importance of acknowledging psychological work characteristics, values and attitudes to study diversity is stressed (Bakagiannis and Tarrant, 2006; Harrison, Price, and Bell, 1998; Lambert and Bell, 2013). Amongst the reasons suggested for the ambiguity surrounding the term is that it lacks a binary opposition and is ascribed meaning contextually (Hearn and Louvrier, 2015). This creates a challenge for diversity research, as contextual factors are often disregarded (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012; Knights and Omanović, 2015).

The conceptual dilemma of diversity is intensified by the positivistic ontology shaping many diversity studies, whereby individual identities are reduced to representatives of certain demographic groups (Zanoni *et al.,* 2010). The socially constructed nature of identities is largely ignored, with interdependencies between diversity dimensions being equally disregarded and research being focused on single categories of differences (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). Furthermore, members of studied groups are often compared to the 'ideal' white, western, heterosexual, middle/upper class, and physically abled male, which automatically marginalises members of other demographic groups (Zanoni *et al.*, 2010). Studies focusing on a single diversity dimension, have frequently neglected variations within that dimension. Ethnicity, for instance, is mostly studied by comparing whites to "others/ non-whites" (Williams and O'reilly, 1998). Diversity as a concept is used as an umbrella term, which subsumes individual characteristics or differences, with the aim of diminishing inter-group conflicts (Zanoni *et al.,* 2010). The significance of certain diversity dimensions' influence, such as gender or ethnicity, being uncontested, has meant that many scholars have conducted their studies according to those dimensions (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). Moreover, studies that do approach diversity research from a categorisation perspective, thereby considering several diversity dimensions, still lack empirical research to confirm the dimensions and their respective categorisation (Qin, Muenjohn and Chhetri, 2014). Next, there is consideration of the most widely researched diversity dimensions.

Whilst numerous dimensions of diversity have been studied, the six that have been most widely researched are: gender, race, age, education, tenure and functional background (Van Knippenberg, De Dreu and Homan, 2004; Qin, Muenjohn and Chhetri, 2014). Recently, Theodorakopoulos and Budhwar (2015) identified the following key themes of diversity research: race and ethnicity, gender, culture, disability, age and sexual orientation. Additionally, class is a significant diversity dimension, which has to an extent been disregarded (Holvino, 2010; Zanoni *et al.*, 2010; Hanappi-Egger and Ortlieb, 2016). Possibly due to the multiple approaches to conceptualising class, it is frequently not included in diversity discussions (Scully and Blake-Beard, 2006). In organisational structures, class reflects power inequalities and becomes a complex construct into which other diversity dimensions are anchored (Zanoni, 2011). Class hierarchies reflect differences in control of and access to resources, thus ultimately constituting power (Acker, 2006).

Gender is one of the most studied diversity dimensions. Research on gender equality has been focused on various dynamics: barriers to career advancement, affirmative action, sexual harassment and discrimination (Murrell and James, 2001). The discussion on whether women have equal access to career opportunities as well as experience equal extrinsic and intrinsic work outcomes is still ongoing (Kossek, Su, and Wu, 2017). The vast majority of gender equality studies, however, have been focused on western cultures, such as the US and Europe, with much less research on other cultural settings (Syed and Ali, 2019). The significant influence of religion, socioeconomic dynamics and cultural traditions on gender equality have not been thoroughly explored (Özbilgin, Syed, Ali, and Torunoglu, 2012). Alongside gender, ethnicity significantly shapes the dynamics of inequality (Guillaume, Brodbeck and Riketta, 2012) and is listed by many scholars as a visible, primary (e.g. Jackson *et al.*, 1995; Qin *et al.*, 2014), and surface level dimension (e.g. Mor Barak *et al.*, 2016; Phillips *et al.*, 2006). Issues of racism go beyond organisational realms, influencing the aspects of employment, justice, education and health (Wilkinson, 1995).

Age has been studied as a visible dimension of diversity (Harrison *et al.*, 2002; Milliken and Martins, 1996; Phillips *et al.*, 2006; Van Knippenberg *et al.*, 2004), being a natural way in which individuals categorise and compare themselves to others (Timmerman, 2000). That is, age is a universal mechanism for distinguishing between individuals due to its immediate

visibility (Perry and Parlamis, 2006). Age stereotypes have been extensively researched (Finkelstein and Burke, 1995; Finkelstein and Burke, 1998; Goldberg, Finkelstein, Perry, and Konrad, 2004; Posthuma and Campion, 2009).

Diversity in terms of culture and/or nationality has further been stated as a diversity dimension (e.g. Milliken and Martins, 1996; Cox, 2001; Childs, 2005; DiTomaso, Post and Parks-Yancy, 2007; Mor Barak, 2016; Mor Barak *et al.*, 2016). Many scholars of diversity have included cross-cultural orientation as a theme (Parham and Muller, 2008), in particular because evidence suggests that cultural diversity among team members can make the team more prone to stereotyping processes (Parham and Muller, 2008; Zaidman and Malach-Pines, 2014). However, in contrast to other strands of diversity (i.e. gender, age, and ethnicity), a coherent literature on the influence and definition of national/cultural diversity is still lacking (Shore *et al.*, 2009). Owing to the complexity of diversity as a concept, scholars often choose to focus on these same dimensions, the significance of which having been preestablished by previous research (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). This focus on strictly predetermined diversity dimensions can lead to a false sense of universalism of human differences (Siebers, 2009; Zanoni *et al.*, 2010; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). Hence, diversity literature, despite the numerous definitions of the construct, faces a challenge of categorisation. That is, deciding which diversity dimensions are salient in a given research context and subsequently operationalising the concept remains a daunting challenge. These discussions shape the aims of this research, which is to investigate individual diversity perceptions and thereby identify what aspects and dimensions of diversity individuals consider salient in their work context. Consequently, the next subsection discusses diversity management and issues surrounding its effectiveness; especially the link between diversity conceptualisations and diversity management practices.

2.1.2 Diversity Management: Meaning and Challenges

This subsection reviews literature which highlights the significance of diversity conceptualisations for its appropriate management. As such, it starts with defining diversity management and then discusses the effectiveness of diversity management practices as well as the various measures implemented by organisations. Researchers generally agree that unless appropriately managed, diversity does not deliver beneficial outcomes in organisations (Joshi *et al.,* 2011; Konrad *et al.,* 2015). If it is mismanaged, it can have undesirable influences, such as lower levels of work group performance and social integration (Guillaume *et al.*, 2014). If appropriately addressed, diversity can enhance the innovation and creativity of employees (Joshi and Roh, 2009; Guillaume, Brodbeck and Riketta, 2012). Some researchers have drawn a line between a narrow and a broad definition of diversity management (Subeliani and Tsogas, 2005; Heres and Benschop, 2010). The narrow view refers to aspects covered by affirmative action policies: sociocultural aspects such as race and gender (Subeliani and Tsogas, 2005). Thus, programmes or initiatives in the narrow sense are concerned with clearly defined social groups (Heres and Benschop, 2010). The broad view, on the other hand, involves adopting the notion that diversity is about any possible way individuals might differ, in terms of such as values, organisational function or tenure and sexual orientation (Subeliani and Tsogas, 2005). Recent literature has put forward three main strands of diversity management: the equal opportunities view, which focuses on appropriate representation of minority groups in organisations; the business case, which stresses the positive influence of diversity on organisational performance; and the final views combines the two, seeking the representation and integration of minority employees (Otaye-Ebede, 2018; Shen, Chanda, D'Netto, and Monga, 2009).

Diversity researchers agree that in practice, the management of diversity is often anchored within human resources management. The identification and research of effective diversity management initiatives is thus a key focus of human resources management (Guillaume *et al.*, 2014). The essence of diversity management is suggested to be: strategic thinking, people-centred organisational policies and an HR management philosophy that focuses on people related processes (Shen, Chanda, D'Netto, and Monga, 2009). Both HR management and diversity management address individual differences and are concerned with the well-being and development of individuals (Truss *et al.*, 1997). Diversity management is about appreciating heterogeneity amongst employees, whilst aiming to improve organisational

performance (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2009). Organisations (especially small and medium sized ones) often adopt informal diversity management policies, which aim to ensure recruitment, hiring and performance appraisal practices acknowledge diversity (Manoharan, Sardeshmukh and Gross, 2019).

Research shows that numerous measures have been adopted by organisations to manage diversity, including: training, mentoring, team building, process consultation, survey feedback and intergroup development (Subeliani and Tsogas, 2005; Curtis and Dreachslin, 2008). Companies have set up a range of initiatives to managing diversity, such as: diversity offices, the primary function of which is to study diversity related issues and make recommendations for managing them (Subeliani and Tsogas, 2005); communication initiatives, to spread awareness on diversity and to praise diversity achievements of staff; and external collaboration with programmes and organisations supporting minorities (Jayne and Dipboye, 2004). Despite the literature on diversity indicating the implementation of various diversity management measures, workplace inequality, from a diversity perspective, is a continuing problem. Persisting challenges range from recruitment discrimination to progression barriers, pay gaps, harassment, bullying, and exclusion from social networks (Gifford *et al.*, 2019). The effectiveness of diversity management measures is still heavily debated (i.e. Bartels, Nadler, Kufahl, and Pyatt, 2013; Noon, 2018; Vassilopoulou, 2017).

Taking diversity training as an example, which is considered one of the most popular diversity management tools (Esen, 2005; Jones *et al.*, 2013), research shows that it has little effect on outcomes desired by organisations (Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly, 2006; Roberson, Kulik, and Pepper, 2001). Unconscious bias training, for example, whilst theoretically seeming to have potential to reduce bias, does not necessarily lead to actual change (Noon, 2018). Initiatives aimed at eliminating managerial bias, such as diversity performance measurement and diversity training, have reported a being widely ineffective (Kalev, Dobbin and Kelly, 2006). In contrast, initiatives promoting employee integration, such as mentoring programmes and awarding full-time jobs to minorities show an increase in diversity at the management level (Dobbin and Kalev, 2013). At all three levels, individual, team and organisational, research has shown inconclusive results regarding the benefits of diversity management interventions (Roberson *et al.*, 2001; Sanchez and Medkik, 2004).

Studies have shown that diversity management policies do not necessarily lead to a more diverse workforce and that many organisations are reluctant to hire women and ethnic minorities for senior management positions (Shen *et al.*, 2009). One factor influencing the effectiveness of diversity management efforts might be related to how diversity is conceptualised and understood in the first place (Bunderson and Sutcliffe, 2002). Prior to designing programmes or initiatives to manage diversity, organisations need to develop a clear concept of what differences need to be managed (Alcázar, Fernández and Gardey, 2013). The practitioner side shows a lack of understanding regarding what diversity is (Kulik, 2014). This gap is particularly high when it comes to human resources management functions, such as selection and interview techniques, and performance management (Rynes, Brown and Colbert, 2002). Many studies have delivered conclusive results regarding diversity management effectiveness; however, these focus on one single dimension of diversity while the reality of diverse workplaces requires consideration of all diversity dimensions simultaneously (Shore *et al.*, 2009). This focus on single diversity dimensions links to how diversity is conceptualised. Systems of diversity and equality management "*provide challenges to the way people conceptualize and tackle issues that are related to equality, sameness, difference, discrimination, and injustice in employment*" (Armstrong *et al.*, 2010, p. 978). The tension surrounding diversity definitions influences managerial diversity practices. The conceptualisation of diversity influences how it needs to be managed; a dimensional approach to defining diversity results in the focus on single dimensions (inclusion of disadvantaged groups), whereas a perceptual approach means diversity managers define diversity as what employees perceive it to be (Qin *et al.*, 2014). The inconclusiveness of studies investigating the effect of diversity on team outcomes increases the need for an appropriate understanding of the construct (Jackson, Joshi, and Erhardt, 2003; Milliken and Martins, 1996; Qin *et al.*, 2014; Williams and O'reilly, 1998). Definitions of diversity mostly state that diversity is about differences, yet the nature of these and their patterns within groups have not been sufficiently explored (Harrison and Klein, 2007). The field of diversity research needs a better understanding of the construction of diversity related phenomena, such as: racism, homophobia, discrimination, inequality, inclusion and diversity climate as well as whiteness (Janssens and Steyaert, 2019). A context-specific understanding of these phenomena advances the understanding of diversity as a construct, and forwards diversity management practices. In conclusion, diversity management practices are designed based on an understanding and definition of diversity, unclarity on what constitutes diversity thus negatively reflects on how it is managed. Therefore, the necessity of appropriately conceptualising diversity of an

organisation's employees for the effective management of diversity is highlighted. In addition, researchers suggest that the majority of diversity management research focuses on its outcomes from an organisational perspective, while the micro individual level is under-researched (Otaye-Ebede, 2019). Scholars are hence calling for the consideration of employees' views of diversity management (Sabharwal, 2014), especially because a disparity between the perspectives of diversity managers and the organisation's employees is suggested. The former are suggested to focus on the content of diversity management policies, whilst the latter are interested in the mechanism of implementing said policies (Otaye-Ebede, 2018). As such, this research investigates the employees' perceptions of diversity management practices in addition to their perceptions of which differences constitute diversity. The next subsection addresses the importance of contextualisation for diversity research and how it is undertaken for this research.

2.2 Contextualisation of Diversity Research

To address the tensions surrounding diversity conceptualisations and the diversity management results discussed above, an important first step is to consider the context in which research is being conducted. Scholars have been advocating for contextualisation of management research for a long while (Johns, 2006; Bamberger, 2008; Syed and Özbilgin, 2009). The aim of such consideration is to minimise the macro-micro research gap (Bamberger, 2008; Joshi and Roh, 2009). Organisational researchers describe context as the surroundings of a phenomenon, which help elucidate it and usually exist at higher level analysis than the phenomenon itself (Cappelli and Sherer, 1991). That is, diversity research should be situated in the different layers of context, such as: cultures or countries industries, and organisations. Contexts consist of an extensive range of factors that vary across levels of analysis as well as in their influence on human interactions (Härtel and O'Connor, 2014). Johns (2006) operationalised context in research by describing two types: omnibus, referring to macro aspects, such as location, time and occupation; and discrete, pertaining to aspects specific to the task as well as the social and physical environment, which are socio-psychological in nature. The following section discusses contextualisation of diversity research and elaborates on the different contexts considered in this research: national country context, industry/sector context, organisational context, and individual professional context.

Similar to management research, diversity literature has been criticised for ignoring contextual and power relation factors, which are pertinent to diversity management questions (Knights and Omanović, 2016; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). Diversity research has been focused to a great extent on individual acts leading to discrimination in isolation from the historical context, which usually shapes the unequal access to resources among socio-demographic groups (Siebers, 2009). The negligence of historical power relations, combined with a mostly managerial perspective on diversity and its management (Zanoni *et al.*, 2010), can reinforce existing stereotypes and exacerbate the hostile gap between majorities and minorities (Linnehan and Konrad, 1999). Diversity conceptualisations, and the management of diversity respectively, require a context-specific investigation of diversity. Studying context or contextual factors influencing diversity can contribute to research which addresses the effectiveness of diversity management practices (Johns, 2006; Bamberger, 2008; Joshi and Roh, 2009). For example, Joshi and Roh (2009) examined the influence of contextual factors at multiple levels – team, industry and organisation – on diversity outcomes. Their results

revealed that direct influence of diversity on team performance was non-existent when analysed in segregation from contextual factors, but doubled or tripled when context was taken into consideration (Joshi and Roh, 2009). Accordingly, in this part of the chapter, the contextualisation of management research is discussed, covering the cultural, industry and the organisational contexts.

The context for diversity can be defined as "*the specific features of the environment that might enhance or constrain the occurrence and meaning of diversity in groups or teams and the relationship between diversity and attitudinal, behavioural, and performance outcomes*" (Joshi and Roh, 2013, p. 211). Özbilgin, Tatli, and Jonsen (2015) proposed a contextual model of global diversity management, which considers five contexts: international, national, sectoral, organisational and individual. Also addressing diversity research contextualisation, Joshi and Roh (2013) put forward a theoretical framework to examine how context shapes team diversity outcomes, which includes these diversity contexts: relational, structural and normative (Joshi and Roh, 2013; Roberson, 2013). The relational diversity context refers to interpersonal interactions among individuals within the organisation, and the extent to which these are built on trust, inclusion and positive affect (Joshi and Roh, 2013). A relational approach to study diversity opens the possibility to consider contextual factors on an individual level from the perspective of the individual as part of a group (Syed and Özbilgin, 2009). The structural diversity context pertains to the overall diversity of the organisation and the extent to which managerial levels are inclusive (i.e. the number of minority group members in higher management positions) (Joshi, Liao and Jackson, 2006; Joshi and Roh, 2013). Structural segregation can lead to centralisation of power and authority with socially dominant groups (Cox, 1994; DiTomaso et al., 2007; Joshi and Roh, 2009). The normative diversity context is reflected in the organisation's culture, tradition, history, management practices and climate. These aspects shape the norms and values of an organisation and can have a strong impact on diversity outcomes (Joshi and Roh, 2013). Nonetheless, contextualizing diversity research requires the researcher to specify factors at team, organizational and extra organizational levels which shape diversity dynamics and thus comes with its share of complexity (Joshi and Roh, 2009). Consequently, the following subsections discuss the different elements of the contexts within which diversity is situated.

2.2.1 National Culture Context and Diversity Research

Cross cultural research faces the challenge of ensuring conceptual validity of culture across studied cultural groups, to address this challenge, building upon the knowledge of national researchers and considering other national differentiation factors is recommended (Tsui, Nifadkar, and Ou, 2007). Interactions between social groups within the organisation are a reflection of interactions between those groups in the external social structure the organisation exists within (Joshi and Roh, 2013). Organisational culture can sustain existing inequality structures of the country it operates within, which thus requires consideration of the national cultural context when researching diversity.

Definitions and meanings of diversity and its management vary depending on time and place. In Germany, for example, diversity management goes beyond the organisational sphere to address social integration, race and ethnicity issues (Tatli *et al.*, 2012). The cultural context also influences the saliency of diversity dimensions. For example, ethnicity and religion play a significant role in the Middle East and India. Moreover, the household status creates bias in China, where rural migrants are discriminated against routinely both socially and in the workplace (Shen *et al.*, 2009). On the individual level, identity construction processes may vary depending on the cultural context in which they are taking place (Dutton, Roberts and Bednar, 2010). For instance, collectivist cultures tend to distinguish more sharply between members of in- and out-groups, which impacts on the views on diversity and the extent to which out-group members are accommodated (Jonsen, Maznevski and Schneider, 2011). One of the challenges in the field of diversity and inclusion research is defining the constructs under investigation within given national contexts. This requires both single country studies, which analyse in depth the country context to explain research results and investigation that compares diversity initiatives/policies across two or more countries (Farndale *et al.*, 2015). Despite awareness of the sensitivity of culture as a diversity dimension, literature on the relationship between cultures and organisations has been described as disparate and controversial (Soin and Scheytt, 2006). Diversity studies ironically show limited diversity and intensely focuses on the organisational context of the United States (Joshi and Roh, 2009; Jonsen, Maznevski and Schneider, 2011) and more recently, on Western European countries (Syed, Burke and Pinar Acar, 2010).

Due to the complexity of the construct, it is challenging to develop a single all-encompassing definition of culture (Francesco and Gold, 2005; Broeways and Price, 2011; French, 2015). A further dilemma is that many definitions suggested by scholars carry contradicting meanings (Broeways and Price, 2011; Patel, 2014). Many definitions have been criticised for assuming a generalisability of culture to whole societies or for stereotyping members of a society (Magala, 2005; French, 2015). Most cognitive definitions of culture assume one single dominant identity, thereby disregarding the connotation that individuals can have overlapping, multiple and constantly changing identities (Magala, 2005). Thus, "*Cultures are best viewed as variable, open, and dynamic systems and not as uniform, total, or totalizing entities*" (Markus, Kitayama and Heiman, 1996, p. 863). Culture is therefore perceived as an environment within which opposing values can exist (Fang, 2005).

Scholars have identified different themes which underlie definitions and conceptualisations of culture. Culture as a structure of elements (i.e. ideas, behaviours, symbols), as a function or tool to achieve certain goals, as a process that is socially constructed, as a product of meaningful activity, as a refinement of individual and group cultivation, in terms of group-based power and ideology and finally, culture in terms of group-memberships (Faulkner, Baldwin, Lindsley, and Hecht, 2006). Interpretive research scholars have argued that, within a society, rival definitions of reality co-exist (D'Iribarne, 2009). Defining culture as a process of social construction means it is constructed by individuals through communication (Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982) and experienced as a process of sense-making (Spindler and Spindler, 1990). Hence, an ongoing process takes place through which individuals constantly define and redefine themselves (Drzewiecka and Halualani, 2002; Faulkner *et al.*, 2006). In short, culture "*embodies the processes by which a group constructs and passes on its reality, rather than the reality it self-handed down to others*" (Faulkner *et al.*, 2008 p. 40). The consideration of national culture in interpretative research in an organisational context, thus, is not aimed at highlighting the characteristics of certain cultures (D'Iribarne, 2009). Rather, such research explores the process through which individuals from different societies/cultures create a new one or reach a common understanding of how things are to be done (Brannen and Salk, 2000; Sackmann and Phillips, 2004). Tsui, Nifadkar, and Ou (2007) made several recommendations for the contextualisation of cultural research, the ones listed below are guiding this research:

1. Culture is a collective group level construct: groups share cultures yet individuals within one group can vary;

2. Adopting a poly-contextual approach to culture; one which incorporates multiple contexts in which the studied phenomenon exists;
3. Conducting research by adopting multiple level approaches, thereby avoiding focusing singularly on the individual, industry or national levels;
4. Ensuring validity of the construct by making sure the items constituting a phenomenon have an equivalent meaning across the studied samples;
5. Conducting country specific research at native level, wherein scholars conduct country-specific research in their native countries.

The empirical section includes a comparison of the countries included in this research and discusses diversity issues according to each respective country profile. The subsection below briefly introduces the theories integrated to investigate the national culture context, which are further elaborated in chapter 6 of this thesis. The integration of several theoretical lenses is suggested to predict the influence of national culture on individual diversity attitudes (Traavik and Adavikolanu, 2016). Additionally, it is argued to be appropriate to predict differences in individual behaviour at country level comparisons (Lunnan and Traavik, 2009). Firstly, Hofstede's dimensions are drawn upon to conduct this research comparatively. That is, according to him, three characteristics shape culture: its collectivist nature; its invisible manifestation in behaviours; and it being shared by some individuals, but not necessarily all members of a certain group (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov, 2010). Hofstede's dimensions and their values for the respective culture are included in chapter 6 of this thesis. Hofstede's dimensions are extensively adopted to conduct cross cultural research (Taras *et al.*, 2010). For example, Farndale and Sanders (2017) rely on four of Hofstede's dimensions to conceptualise human resources management systems cross culturally. In similar vein, Löckenhoff *et al.* (2014), situate the relevance of cultural values for the formation of gender stereotypes using Hofstede's dimensions. However, whilst Hofstede's framework has been labelled the most influential in that field, it has been criticised for being outdated, methodologically flawed and too theoretical (Magnusson *et al.*, 2008). Williamson (2002) mentioned important aspects researchers need to consider, especially when relying on Hofstede's model. It was stressed that individuals from the same culture are not perfectly homogeneous with regards to their cultural attributes and that factors beyond national culture influence the identities and behaviours of individuals (Williamson, 2002; Tsui, Nifadkar and Ou, 2007). Additionally, researchers emphasise that contemporary socio-political and cultural trends shaping a specific national context must be considered in order to address the criticism of Hofstede's assumption that cultural values are stable over time (Hennekam, and Tahssain-Gay, 2015). More recent

research on the validity of Hofstede's dimensions stresses the importance of acknowledging that cultures change of over time (Taras and Kirkman, 2011). The integration of several theoretical lenses to culturally contextualise research ensures a more realistic evaluation of the culture. To this regard, Traavik and Adavikolanu (2016) referred to both Hofstede's dimensions and the World Values Survey, and provide a brief historical description of the countries they researched. Moreover, a study on the standardisation of human resources management practices in China, Lithuania and Norway deployed both Hofstede and Inglehart's dimensions (Lunnan and Traavik, 2009). Hence, conceptualising the Egyptian, German and UK cultural contexts in terms of Hofstede's dimensions, the World Values Survey orientation, cultural tightness-looseness, as well as considering the historical, social, political and legal contexts (as provided in chapter 6) is a comprehensive cultural conceptualisation, and rigorous research approach. Hence, adopting Hofstede's model in cross-cultural research needs to be done in alignment with his original goal, which is developing the dimensions to differentiate systemically between cultures (French, 2015).

The second theory integrated to contextualise culture is the cultural 'tightness-looseness' theory. The cultural tightness-looseness approach adds an additional perspective to the national values proposed by Hofstede (Farndale and Sanders, 2017). Furthermore, the integration of national values and cultural tightness-looseness is suggested to complement existing research, which largely focuses on cultural values, but often disregards the strength of social norms (Aktas, Gelfand, and Hanges, 2016). The theory, which is rooted in psychology, anthropology and sociology, has been applied to numerous organisational processes, such as leadership (Aktas, Gelfand and Hanges, 2016), human resources management (Farndale and Sanders, 2017), consumer behaviour (Li, Gordon and Gelfand, 2017), and organisational behaviour (Gelfand, Erez and Aycan, 2007). The tightness or looseness of a culture is manifested in the strength of social norms and the extent to which their violation is socially sanctioned (Jackson, Gelfand, and Ember, 2019). Strong homogeneity of values, attitudes and beliefs contributes to the tightness of a given culture (Triandis, 2017). Under cultural tightness-looseness theory, it is further posited that cultures become tighter based on intergroup relationships and political structure (Jackson *et al.,* 2019). In sum, tightness of a culture means there is low tolerance for deviant behaviour and the appropriate forms of behaviour are strictly defined, while loose cultures offer a variation of acceptable behaviours (Stamkou *et al.*, 2019). The cultural tightness-looseness values for each country researched (Egypt, Germany and the UK) are discussed in the empirical chapter analysing the national culture context.

Finally, the world values survey is integrated to contextualise national culture. The world values survey is considered the largest cross-national, and non-commercial time series investigation on individual values and is conducted in over 100 countries since 1981 (Tausch, 2016). This builds upon Inglehart and Welzel's (2010) conceptualisation of social value orientations. The underlying assumption is that societies can be compared based on two value dimensions: survival vs. self-expression, and traditional vs. secular/rational. Survival oriented societies value physical and economic security, whilst self-expression ones value subjective wellbeing and the quality of life. Traditional vs. secular/rational orientation refers to the degree of importance of religion and tradition (Traavik and Adavikolanu, 2016). These value orientations reflect several social dynamics, including: change of social values over time; links between socioeconomic transformation and cultural values; and differences in national policy outcomes relating to gender and sexual liberation (Welzel and Inglehart, 2016). Topics relating to religion, family, democracy, sexuality, ethnic diversity and gender are covered by the survey (WVS Database, 2013). Researchers suggest that the integration of the world values survey data with other theoretical lenses (such as Hofstede, cultural tightness-looseness, and socio-political dynamics) provides meaningful comparisons of national cultures (Lunnan and Traavik, 2009). The social value orientations and topics surveyed in relation to diversity for each of Egypt, Germany and the UK are discussed in chapter 6. To summarise, for this research, cultural dimensions, value orientations, cultural tightness-looseness and historical as well as socio-political descriptions are adopted to situate diversity perceptions in the national context of an individual. In doing so, the researcher acknowledges previous approaches to studying and comparing cultures.

2.2.2 Industry Context and Diversity Research

Evidence-based diversity management research highlights the significant influence of an organisation's context: its size, location, strategic orientation and sector for its implementation (Gifford *et al.*, 2019). Education, types of organisation and industry are contextual factors that can influence diversity and its management (Syed and Özbilgin, 2009). A contextual approach to global diversity management acknowledges the influence of the sectoral context in addition to individual, national and international ones (Özbilgin, Jonsen, Tatli, Vassilopoulou, and Surgevil, 2008).

Diversity dynamics are industry-specific, particularly in terms of underrepresented groups and the nature of challenges these groups face. The UK construction industry, for instance, shows

a critically low representation of women; who face barriers concerning both recruitment and retention in the industry (Clarke, Michielsens and Snijders, 2018). Despite the implementation of numerous diversity management policies, dominant male norms and the necessity of long working hours and presenteeism continue to persist (Ness, 2012). In the U.S., one ethnicity related phenomenon that has been observed, is that Hispanic construction employees suffer a higher rate of fatal work-related injuries than non-Hispanic ones (Al-Bayati, Abudayyeh and Albert, 2018). The higher education sector has also been extensively studied in terms of the diversity of both staff and students (Croxford and Raffe, 2015). The percentage of non-white individuals holding senior leadership positions in higher education institutions was found to be alarmingly low (Gasman, Abiola and Travers, 2015). The 'whiteness' of the context within which higher education institutions exist is a key factor causing the low ethnic diversity (Wolfe and Dilworth, 2015). In the UK higher education sector, the experiences of ethnic minority women in academia is, to date, under-researched (Sang, 2018). Policies to support women's career progression and retention are required in UK HE institutions by the Equality Act of 2010, yet the effective strategic and structural handling of these issues remains to be proven (Bhopal, 2019). In short, different industries show different diversity dynamics and therefore, have different diversity management needs. Indeed, scholars are calling for the consideration of diversity management as a construct influenced by organisations' size, location and industry (Theodorakopoulos and Budhwar, 2015). Accordingly, the context of the industry is contextualised in this research by exploring diversity in the technology industry. To date, the representation of women in technology related work as well as education has been a key challenge for the industry (Stoet and Geary, 2018). The extent to which cultural context influences diversity dynamics, such as the experience of women, for instance, has not yet been extensively researched (Saifuddin, Dyke and Hossain, 2019). A recent report on diversity in the technology industry shows that ethnic discrimination, stress, anxiety and mental health are key matters being faced by minorities in the industry (BIMA, 2019). Prevalent diversity issues in the technology industry are centred on inequalities relating to gender, ethnicity, class, and disability (CASE, 2014). Furthermore, the industry context is considered by acknowledging that individuals' social and role identities are situated within it. Processes shaping identity construction in the technology industry are, thus, discussed in the next chapter of this thesis. In addition, diversity dynamics in the technology industry are discussed in section 5.3 of this thesis, which introduces the national, sectoral and organisational contexts investigated in this research. Finally, the influence of the industry context on diversity dynamics is further elaborated on in chapter seven.

2.2.3 Organisational Context and Diversity Research

The consideration of organisations as a context in which diversity is situated is equally important to contextualising research at the national level. Diversity research must take into account how organisational culture, as a context, influences group diversity and constitutes a social control system shaping individual behaviour (Chuang, Church and Zikic, 2004). Research indicates that organisational culture can be a powerful mechanism for managing diversity and can either result in divisiveness or solidarity (Williams and O'reilly, 1998; Richard and Miller, 2013). The organisational culture context needs to emphasise teamwork, participation and cohesiveness in order to create inclusive working environments (Dwyer, Richard and Chadwick, 2003; Pless and Maak, 2004; Richard and Miller, 2013). Organisational cultures are often based on the values and beliefs of the powerful elite (Syed and Özbilgin, 2009), which poses the risk of sustaining inequality within the organisation and highlights the necessity to consider organisational context in diversity research. Organisational context is considered here in terms of three aspects: the meaning of organisational culture, the inclusivity of organisational cultures and the socio-psychological processes influencing diversity in organisations. The organisational aspects which shape employee diversity perceptions are discussed in chapter seven of this thesis, which presents the meso level investigation. These elements include organisational leadership support and diversity management and human resources policies.

Organisational culture has been defined as "*the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems*" (Schein, 1984, p. 3). It refers to shared expectations on how decisions are made, how employees should behave, and how customers need to be treated (Siakas and Siakas, 2015). In terms of what constitutes organisational culture, research suggests that the social and physical environment, common language, behavioural norms and patterns, role models, symbols, beliefs and basic assumptions form organisational cultures (Brown, 1998). Several approaches to organisational culture conceptualisation are dimensional. For example, a six-dimensional model suggests the following: process vs. results orientation, employee vs. job orientation, parochial vs. professional, open vs. closed, loose vs. tight control and normative vs. pragmatic (Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, and Sanders, 1990). The competing values model, alternatively, assumes two main dimensions based on which four typologies of

organisational culture are proposed: formal versus informal organisational processes and internal verses external focus (Cameron and Quinn, 2006; Richard and Miller, 2013). The organisational cultural profile model contains seven dimensions: innovation, team orientation, respect for people, aggressiveness, stability, attention for detail and outcome orientation (O'Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell, 1991). Organisations are further differentiated for being dynamic and changing, such as technology or fashion firms, or predictable and mechanistic, such as government agencies or universities (Cameron and Quinn, 2006). The orientation of organisational culture (internal or external) differentiates organisations (Kara and Zellmer-Bruhn, 2010). This refers to the extent to which they adapt their cultures in each local area office, or have one unified global culture (Cameron and Quinn, 2006). Organisational cultures perceived as friendly workplaces with an almost family-like atmosphere and that encourage teamwork and employee participation in decision making, foster diversity (Richard and Miller, 2013). Employees in such organisations share a strong sense of "we" and employee involvement programmes are implemented to nurture their sense of corporate commitment (Cameron and Quinn, 2006). The organisation draws its success from strong employee morale, loyalty and commitment (Dwyer, Richard and Chadwick, 2003).

2.2.4 Inclusive Organisations

Distinguishing diversity and inclusion, Burnett and Kettleborough, (2007, p. 103) state that: "*diversity is often a game of percentages, a game where the rules state that organizations must frantically hire visibly different people in order to hit targets or quotas. Inclusion takes the journey further. Inclusion is about creating environments where all people can prosper and progress irrespective of race, colour, gender, physical ability, age, religion, sexual orientation or belief.*" Inclusion is closely linked to diversity. The two concepts are sometimes used interchangeably, yet research shows distinct definitions for the two: inclusion is perceived as an approach to diversity management (Roberson, 2006). Moreover, individuals generally perceive a difference between diversity and inclusion, in that the former is seen as being about the demographic composition of groups or organisations, whilst the latter is associated with organisational efforts to leverage diversity and increase employee participation (Roberson, 2006). Several definitions of inclusion can be traced in research. For example, Mor Barak, Cherin and Berkman, (1998) define it as the degree to which employees perceive themselves to be involved in significant organisational processes, such as: access to resources and information, influencing decision making processes, and involvement in work groups or networks. An organisation's climate for inclusion has been referred to as minimising the

relational causes of bias; accomplished by ensuring that the status of the identity group a person belongs to, is unrelated to their access to resources, their position within organisational networks and their contribution to the organisation (Nishii, 2013).

Diversity climate developed as a concept referring to workplaces embracing diversity. It refers to the degree to which employees perceive the organisation as valuing diversity, this being reflected in the organisational structures, values and integration of underrepresented employee groups (Dwertmann, Nishii and van Knippenberg, 2016). Despite inclusion being a recent construct, which developed based on diversity literature and practice, it can be traced in earlier works. As Allport (1954) prescribed, individuals need to be of approximately equal status, they need to be able to know each other less formally, thereby, countering stereotypes and finally, individuals need to be able to work together across organisational levels, roles and demographic boundaries through participative decision making (cf. Nishii, 2013). Whilst inclusive workplaces have been defined as those valuing individual and group differences, addressing the needs of underprivileged groups in their direct community and actively cooperating across boundaries to promote equality (Mor Barak, 2016). A diverse workplace is, however, not to be confused with an inclusive one (Kossek and Pichler, 2008). Working groups might be highly diverse, but not all members have equal status (such as access to information and decision making power). Shore *et al.*, (2011) drew on several definitions of inclusion, as put forward in literature, to link inclusion to the optimal distinctiveness theory. The main themes appearing in definitions of inclusion are belongingness, which is reflected in notions of acceptance and being a group insider; and uniqueness, which refers to valuing individualism as well as the contributions and talents of all employees (Shore *et al*., 2011). In a nutshell, under the theory, it is proposed that social identity develops based on reconciliation between two opposing needs (Brewer, 1991). The first need is that of inclusion, which reflects the human need of belongingness, whilst the second, is the need of being distinct from other group members, i.e. the need of differentiation and uniqueness. These two emotions resemble opposing human needs, and the more one is fulfilled the more the other is activated (Brewer, 2012). Accordingly, Shore *et al.* (2011) described inclusion as the state when an individual becomes an insider to a certain group, whilst at the same time, is free and encouraged to retain her/his uniqueness within the group. Taking into consideration that organisations today are increasingly relying on team-based structures (Thomas, 1999; van Knippenberg, van Ginkel and Homan, 2013), it is imperative to consider how belongingness and distinctiveness needs influence group dynamics (Hornsey and Jetten, 2004; Brewer, 2012). As such, group

formations and group relationships are shaped by psychological emotional needs of individuals. Additionally, social identity theory (elaborated upon in more detail in chapter 3) posits that individuals construct their identities and the resulting group memberships based on perceived similarities and differences to others around them (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Accordingly, diversity dimensions (i.e. age, gender, and ethnic origin) can form a basis for group formation and are emotionally/psychologically loaded. The next chapter thus reviews literature on social identities, professional role identity and intersectionality.

2.3 Chapter Summary: Diversity Literature Review

Reviewing the literature on diversity and its management has revealed the evolution of the diversity construct both in research and practice. Nonetheless, several gaps are evident. Specifically, the necessity of revisiting diversity conceptualisations and of proper contextualisation of diversity research and practices have been demonstrated in this chapter. In sum, this chapter has been focused on the meaning of diversity and its management as well as the different layers of context that need to be addressed by diversity research.

Diversity, in its essence, is about human differences and traditionally, differences, such as gender, race, age, education, tenure and functional background, have dominated the focus of the research. Conceptualisations of diversity, as discussed in this chapter, lead to two main research concerns. Firstly, there is no agreement on the differences that should be included in the definition of diversity and respectively, in diversity research. Secondly, due to the complexity of the term, scholars have often focused on single diversity dimensions in their research, thereby ignoring other forms of difference and any intersectional relationships between diversity dimensions. In addition, research on the effectiveness of diversity management practices is, to a great extent, inconclusive. That is, the scholarly literature has provided mixed results regarding when diversity management practices are effective and when not. The lack of diversity management effectiveness is rooted in inadequate conceptualisation and understanding of the construct. In short, to create inclusive working systems and to manage diversity effectively, a robust understanding of diversity and the phenomena relating to inequality is necessary. Questions of diversity and equality are embedded in the different contexts within which an individual exists. Contextualised research has been called for in organisational research, in general and in diversity research, in particular. Individuals experience inequality, discrimination and/or stereotyping based on their membership of certain groups, in certain contexts, at certain points in time. To investigate these experiences detached from their contexts, thus leads to a superficial understanding of inequality. The contexts that influence diversity experiences include: country, industry and organisation. Accordingly, in the chapter, the literature that addresses the contextualisation of diversity research at the macro and meso levels has been discussed and it has been explained how context is tackled in the current work. In order to address individuals situated in their contexts, the next chapter presents literature on the multiple identities an individual holds and on intersectionality, as a lens that integrates these identities.

Chapter 3

Literature Review: Identity and Diversity

Introduction to the Chapter

The chapter reviews literature on two aspects related to diversity: identity and intersectionality. Identity is discussed in terms of professional role identities, social identities and processes of categorisation in organisations. Studying identities in organisational settings is increasingly being hailed as key to the understanding of processes of organising (Brown, 2015; Meisenbach, 2008; Ybema *et al.,* 2009). Identities, referring to what individuals subjectively understand as to who they are, were and aspire to become, are implicated in and around organisations and thus, key to understanding and explaining organisational realms (Brown, 2015). Consideration of the intersectionality between diversity dimensions, is key to grasping the complex and broad meaning of the latter. Hence, the second part discusses intersectionality, its complexity and how it is studied under the diversity umbrella. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the literature on interlinking intersectionality and social identity research.

3.1 Identity in Organisational Research

Organisational research on identity negotiation processes is growing (Meisenbach, 2008), with identity work becoming a frame through which several organisational aspects can be studied (Alvesson, Ashcraft, and Thomas, 2008). Three main foci for identity research in organisations were identified: debates on the nature of identities; how identities are shaped by organisational processes; and issues relating to identity micro-politics (power, structure and agency) (Brown, 2019). Identity work in organisations is viewed as being socially constructed through language and moderated by individuals' relationships to others (McInnes and Corlett, 2012). Regarding diversity in social psychology research, five approaches have been developed to explore how individuals co-construct their identities in a diverse world: social identity; critical identity; (role) identity; narrative as identity; and identity work. It is not uncommon for researchers to draw upon multiple theoretical lenses to explore identity related dynamics and processes (Roberts and Creary, 2013). This part includes a discussion about processes of identity construction in organisations. Both profession-related and social identities are considered, as well as processes by which individuals self-categorise, i.e. distinguish themselves from others. Identity work is the process of individuals' active engagement in forming, maintaining, repairing, revising and/or strengthening the identities that create a sense of distinctiveness and coherence (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). Identity work processes are influenced by

external factors (Brown, 2015). Identity work can be viewed as a balancing act, whereby "*people strive to shape a relatively coherent and distinctive notion of personal self-identity and struggle to come to terms with and, within limits, to influence the various social identities which pertain to them in the various milieu in which they live their lives*" (Watson, 2008, p.129). The construct of identity has been defined as "*a set of self-imposed and externally imposed meanings that situate an entity within a social world through the construction of defining characteristics and relationships with other entities*" (Roberts and Creary, 2013, p. 88). To explore individual diversity perceptions, individuals must be acknowledged as a whole with all identities they might hold (Frable, 1997; Qin, Muenjohn and Chhetri, 2014). An ongoing debate is taking place amongst identity work scholars with regards to identities being (Brown, 2015):

1. Ascribed to or chosen by individuals;
2. Fluid, adaptive or generally stable;
3. Coherent or fragmented;
4. Triggered by a need for positive meaning or not;
5. Shaped by a need for authenticity.

Responding to this general debate lies outside the scope of this research. Yet, to fulfil its aims, it is important to specify the researcher's beliefs towards identity, in general and towards the above listed issues. A twofold meaning for identity is acknowledged here. In line with social identity theory postulations (Stets and Burke, 2000), identity is viewed a process where individuals constantly reflect to address the question of who they are (Brown, 2015). Furthermore, role identity theory's view on identity is borrowed. That is, identity is perceived in terms of a certain role an individual occupies and the incorporation of expectations and meanings associated with the role and its performance (Stets and Burke, 2000). Both theories acknowledge categorisation processes; they relate to an individual's position within and towards groups, yet the basis for the categorisation process differs. That is, social identities relate to who a person is, whilst role identities pertain to what a person does (Brown, 2015; Hogg, Terry, and White, 1995; Stets and Burke, 2000). Hence, for the working definition for identity guiding this research, the construct is acknowledged as "*individuals' subjective interpretation of who they are, based on their socio-demographic characteristics, roles, personal attributes, and group memberships*" (Caza *et al.*, 2018, p. 889). Social identities of individuals are explored in order to account for diversity aspects, such as gender, ethnicity and nationality (Hogg et al., 1995). Role identities explain how individuals construct their identities based on characteristics socially associated with their professions (Fine, 1996) and hence, this

prompts the need for exploration of the social construction of identities in a specific industry context. Finally, to explore these two types of identity, categorisation processes (i.e. in-/out-group formation, stereotyping, and prejudice), and emotional needs (i.e. self-esteem and belongingness) underlying their construction are considered (Ormiston, 2015; Bonache *et al.*, 2016).

3.1.1 Professional Role Identities

A professional identity is defined as an individual's professional self-concept, which is based on beliefs, attributes, motives, experiences and values (Ibarra, 1999; Slay and Smith, 2011). In contrast to social identities, which can be based on aspects such as gender or nationality and as such, they are considered given identities, professional identities are usually earned (López-Facal and Jiménez-Aleixandre, 2009). The construction of a professional identity is shaped by three primary aspects (Slay and Smith, 2011). Firstly, an individual's professional identity results from socialisation processes and rhetoric, where a person is provided information on meanings associated with the profession (Fine, 1996). Secondly, during times of career transition, individuals adapt and adjust their professional identities (Ibarra, 1999). Lastly, life experiences as well as work related experiences influence a person's professional identity, because they clarify one's self-understanding and priorities (Slay and Smith, 2011; Schein, 1987).

Individuals create identities based on attributes and characteristics considered favourable in their social contexts (Roberts and Creary, 2013; Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Moreover, they strive to construct positive professional identities in their work contexts (Slay and Smith, 2011). These identities are "*a socially negotiated temporary outcome of the dynamic interplay between internal strivings and external prescriptions, between self-presentation and labelling by others, between achievement and ascription and between regulation and resistance*" (Ybema *et al.*, 2009, p.301). Professional identities can thus be both externally and internally constructed. Scholars have reached a consensus that identities are "*the meanings individuals attach reflexively to themselves, and developed and sustained through processes of social interaction as they seek to address the question 'who am I?*'" (Brown, 2015). Relating these aspects of the construction of professional identities to the five discussion points stated by Brown (2015), the following characteristics of identities shape this research. Identities are perceived as neither fully externally allocated, nor simply chosen by individuals, but rather, they usually accommodate identities offered to them and redefine them (Fleming and Spicer, 2003). Also, it is presumed that identities, especially professional ones, can change over time.

For instance, during career transitions, a process of adaptation can occur gradually, but eventually fundamentally changes the self-concept (Pratt, Rockmann, and Kaufmann, 2006). Identities, as such, are perceived as changeable over time, i.e. they are dynamic (Beech, Macintosh and Mcinnes, 2008). Additionally, the notion that individuals desire to create positive identities is adopted for this research. Research on the process of how individuals construct their professional identities suggests that they aim to construct identities of positive, meaningful value (Dutton, Roberts and Bednar, 2010). The identity work of individuals aims at constructing ones that are beneficial or valuable (Dutton, Roberts and Bednar, 2010). According to Social Identity Theory, individuals form their social identities based on their perceived memberships of in-groups associated with a positive social image (Roberts and Creary, 2013). Research suggests that individuals tend to emphasise the positive aspects relating to their occupations (Brown, 2015). However, they can still suffer feelings of shame, guilt or inadequacy, if their work identities are disrespected, which will mar their self-confidence and esteem (Gabriel, 2012). Moreover, it is assumed that individuals carry several identities, mirroring the multiple roles they have.

Proponents of role identity theory explore how individuals manage the diversity of roles they hold and align their sense of self and actions with the expectations associated with each one (Roberts and Creary, 2013). The process of constructing identity is often referred to as navigating one's self, it is herein suggested that "*navigating the self involves proactive identity construction that helps fulfil the need for dignity, recognition, safety, control, purpose, and efficacy*" (Rothman, 1997, p.7). Dutton *et al.* (2010) put forward a typology comprising four dimensions of positive professional identities: virtuous, which emphasise character strength; evaluative, where favourable identity characteristics and groups are the basis for self-esteem; developmental, based on adaptation and progression of identity towards idealistic identities; and finally, structural, referring to the compatibility of the different strands of the self. In short, professional identities are a continuous process of construction in relation to one's work and elements shaping this process can be external or internal to the person and they can be formed in relation to groups. In his discussion of possible directions for future research on identity in organisations, Brown (2015) identifies the five most prominent directions for researchers: temporality, processes, sensemaking, costs and contexts. Since, for this research, diversity is conceptualised in terms of both social and professional identity construction processes, then both contexts and processes are pertinent. Identity research, as with diversity research, needs to be contextualised. Specifically, the influence of contextual factors constituting

organisational and national cultural settings on identity and identity work of individuals is of interest (Brown, 2015). For example, professional identity construction can vary between non-white and white professionals (Nkomo, 1992; Slay and Smith, 2011). In a sense, organisations are perceived as environments in which individuals do their identity works and can either facilitate or disturb identity formation and manifestation (Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2010). There have been insights made into the extent to which individuals working in organisations of similar type share certain topics and strategies relevant to identity work (Brown, 2015). However, the process by which identities evolve has not yet been fully explored (Brown, 2015; Ibarra, 1999) and hence, the factors explaining why and how individuals engage in identity work as well as the implications of their doing so require further exploration (Brown, 2015).

The contextualisation process further requires acknowledging the varying influence of sectoral dynamics on the construction of identity. The focal context of the current research is the technology industry in terms of probing the professional identities of members of its workforce. The role of social identities has often been neglected in engineering under the claim that only skills, competencies and merit determine a person's success (Cech and Waidzunas, 2011; Hughes, 2017; Tate and Linn, 2005). Numerous scholars have, however, shown that the construction of identities in technology is related to several diversity dimensions, including gender, age, sexuality, and ethnicity. The engineering identity has been well researched in relation to the gender dynamics (e.g. Adam *et al.*, 2006; Cech, 2015; Cech, Rubineau, Silbey, and Seron, 2011; Faulkner, 2000, 2007; Hatmaker, 2013; Jorgenson, 2002). In this regard, Hatmaker (2013) investigated how women engineers construct their identities in the gendered engineering profession through the examination of interpersonal interactions, which usually marginalise their professional identities. Cech (2015), explored whether the development of professional identities in the same field is filtered through gender. The results showed that out of four self-conceptions, two were gendered whilst two were gender neutral. Specifically, regarding technological leadership and social consciousness, women tended to value social consciousness more, whilst men put more store in technological leadership. Problem-solving prowess and managerial and communication skills emerged as being gender neutral (Cech, 2015). Examining heterogeneity in engineering work, Faulkner (2007), suggested that engineering identities are fragmented by boundaries of 'the technical' and 'the social' and that women's identification as 'real' engineers is probably more fragile than men's. A fundamental relation is often assumed between technical skill and masculinity, which increases the pressure on women in the field to challenge the masculinity of the skills they are gaining (Adam *et al.*,

2006). Despite differing workplace cultures, varying firm size and industry type, engineers perceive their work similarly, identifying problem-solving, working as part of a formal team as well as independently, and clear communication as key skills necessary in their profession (Anderson *et al.*, 2010). Gender has further been studied in relation to ethnicity and race. In particular, the importance of gender ethnicity intersectionality in technology has been highlighted (Trauth *et al.*, 2012).

Furthermore, research on the nature of professional identities in software work has shown a division of labour between design engineers as an elite and other roles, such as test engineers and technical authors in traditional electronics companies (Barley and Orr, 1997). Employees are distinguishable based on their education, skill level, work role and labour market position. This differentiation points to those with elite roles having high educational attainment, interesting design projects and significant autonomy (Marks and Scholarios, 2007). The construction of identity in engineering has further been studied with a focus on sexual orientation minorities, who, due to the masculinity of technology education and the binary view on gender, raised concerns about homophobia in their educational institutions (Hughes, 2017). The construction of identities reflects categorisation processes, which shape experiences of inequality. In particular, the technology industry shows a number of stereotyping dynamics that have been influencing diversity perceptions. For example, both younger and older generation technology employees are subjected to negative age-based stereotypes (Meinich and Sang, 2018). Women in technology are also faced with various stereotypes stemming from the masculinity associated with working in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (O'Brian *et al.*, 2015). A study on information technology education and employment, shows that women of colour face several forms of covert oppression, including: differential career guidance, negative stereotyping about their intellectual ability, low expectations and negative assumptions about their personal life (Kvasny, Trauth and Morgan, 2009).

To summarise, professional identities in the engineering or technology/software field have been studied with respect to educational prestige, gendered identities, technicality of organisational role, sexuality and interpersonal interactions. The focus of these studies was on engineering and technology students or employees. This research involves exploring professional identities construction of both professionals from technical backgrounds (engineers, information technology professionals, software developers, and designers) as well as managerial or non-technical professional backgrounds (functions such as marketing, human resources management, sales).

3.1.2 Social Identities

A vast body of literature covers intergroup behaviour from a social psychology perspective (Hogg and Abrams, 2007). Researchers have focused on the intrapersonal level, analysing how cognitive processes influence experiences with and reactions to others. Social psychological processes relating to identity construction, group formations/memberships, categorisation, and how these processes influence attitudes and behaviours have been the focus of extant research (Roberson, 2013). Identities are multifaceted constructs that evolve through group memberships, which evoke certain feelings and behaviours relating to these (Roberts and Creary, 2013). Identity construction, thus, constantly interrelates with groups and "categories" of individuals a person interacts with. Originally, the focus of social identity theory was on social cognitive processes and intergroup relationships; however recently, increasing attention has been dedicated to the validity and application of it in an organisational context (Bonache et al., 2016; Hogg et al., 2012). For instance, social identity theory has been applied in conflict resolution and diversity management (Pratt, 2001); employed to study stereotyping processes in a cross-cultural organisational context (Bonache et al., 2016); deployed to probe in-group bias, which refers to favouritism of individuals perceived to be members of one's own group (Brown, 2000; Ellmers and Haslam, 2012); and utilised to examine the influence of visible diversity on group performance (Jackson et al., 1995). The study of diversity from a social psychology perspective has been undertaken through the social identity lens (i.e. Kulik and Bainbridge, 2006; Williams and O'Reilly, 1998; Van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007). Employing this perspective allows for consideration of the cognitive and psychological processes (such as stereotyping and prejudice) in the workplace, which influence the dynamics of conflict between individuals and groups (Ormiston, 2015; Bonache *et al*., 2016; Brewer, 2012; Hornsey and Jetten, 2004; Kulik and Bainbridge, 2006).

According to social identity theory, certain dimensions of diversity, such as nationality, ethnicity or gender, form a basis for individual self-definition, which is a part of the self or identity concept (Hogg *et al.,* 1995). Underlying processes of identity formation and respective group formations, relate to the psychological needs of individuals (Ellmers and Haslam, 2012; Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Individuals move between two extremes of social behaviour: interpersonal, where the social interaction is influenced solely by individual characteristics and interpersonal relationships, and intergroup; where interactions between individuals or groups are completely governed by an individual's group memberships (Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

Social identity theory is governed by three principles. Firstly, individuals aim for creating a positive social identity, thereby acquiring a high sense of self-esteem. Secondly, a positive identity is created when the individual's in-group is perceived as advantageously distinct from out-groups. Individuals feel a bonding to groups they belong to and are motivated to emphasise the distinction and value attributed to their groups' identity (Ellmers and Haslam, 2012). Lastly, when the in-group is negatively perceived, individuals either dissociate from the group or attempt to make it more positively distinct (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). As a consequence, the social identity of individuals refers to their knowledge about belonging to certain groups accompanied by the value and emotional significance of the membership of those groups (Cornelissen, Haslam and Balmer, 2007). In short, social identity theory explains why individuals adopt certain self-navigation or identification strategies over others (Roberts and Creary, 2013).

The social context the individual exists in becomes a key determinant of her/his self-definition and behaviour (Ellmers and Haslam, 2012). It can pose a threat to an individual's identities, if these are devalued in that setting (Steele, Spencer and Aronson, 2002). For example, if a certain sectoral context is dominated by men, women's social identities will be threatened and the resulting experience of stereotyping and prejudice could lead to lower performance (Logel *et al.*, 2009). Despite its wide application, social identity theory has been criticised for oversimplifying identities, by overlooking intersections and subgroup identities, as well as the relational nature of the identity construct (Hornsey, 2008). Identity research has frequently been focused on just a single level of analysis, individual, group, or organisation (Ashforth, Rogers and Corley, 2011). The application of social identity theory in diversity research has mostly been undertaken by adopting a social categorisation lens and the next subsection discusses this application in organisational research.

3.1.3 Categorisation Processes in Organisations

Social categorisation theory is closely linked to social identity theory and has often been employed to study group formation as well as interpersonal and intergroup relationships (e.g. Ashforth *et al.,* 2008; Bonache *et al.,* 2016; Hogg *et al.,* 2012; Kulik and Bainbridge, 2006). The two theories offer explanations regarding how an individual's identity is formed in relation to a collective group or organisational identity (Ashforth *et al.,* 2008). Categorisation in social contexts can be perceived as a process of depersonalisation, whereby individuals are no longer perceived independently, but rather, as an embodiment of the out-groups they are perceived to belong to (Hogg and Terry, 2000). The process of categorisation in an organisational context based on diversity dimensions among employees, can thus shape group formation and interpersonal relationships. Individuals can choose to engage or disengage in activities based on their identities. They form relationships of affinitive nature with their in-group members and loyalty towards the group can shape in absence of any personal interaction and can thereby influence resulting behaviours towards other in- and out-group members (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). The process of social categorisation can lead to favouritism towards the in-group and discrimination against the out-group (Triandis and Trafimow, 2003). Hence, whilst the processes of identity and group formation can be explained by social identity and categorisation theories, their relevance to diversity stems from the necessity of studying the cognitive psychological processes of stereotyping and prejudice, which result in discrimination (Linnehan and Konrad, 1999). Identity formation and categorisation processes, thus, trigger several group related dynamics in the workplace, including: stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination (Bonache *et al.,* 2016; Kulik and Bainbridge, 2006; Triandis and Trafimow, 2003).

Stereotypes are rooted in socially constructed contexts of history, geography and immigration (Fiske, 1998). Several diversity dimensions have been studied in terms of their stereotypes, for instance, age (Finkelstein and Burke, 1995; Finkelstein, King, and Voyles, 2015; Posthuma and Campion, 2009; Weeks, Weeks and Long, 2017), gender (Heilman and Eagly, 2008; Heilman, 2012), and race (Devine, 1989; Bielby, 2000). According to social identity theorists, individuals fulfil needs of differentiation, belongingness and self-enhancement through their social group memberships (Roberts and Creary, 2013). They do this by identifying as similar to favourable 'in-groups' and distinct from less favourable 'out-groups' (Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

During early development of the term stereotype, it referred to the notion that individuals hold certain assumptions about other individuals, an ethnic group or a certain social status (Barker, 1991). Studying stereotypes was thus, to an extent, centred on class and ethnicity. Moreover, a stereotype emphasises that individuals focus on the differences and disregard the similarities among themselves and other individuals or groups, which can eventually cause inter-group conflict to arise (Bonache *et al.,* 2016). To make sense of the world, individuals use cognitive categories, such as schemas, prototypes and stereotypes, to create a structure for all the information they have on a certain topic, individual or group (Kulik and Bainbridge, 2006). Research has suggested that any cues about an individual's gender, age, race and even sometimes their disability status, serve as a convenient manner to categorise information about that group in the memory of an individual (Clair, Beatty and Maclean, 2005; Kulik and Bainbridge, 2006). Accordingly, visible or surface-level diversity dimensions, such as age, gender, ethnicity and nationality (i.e. Harrison *et al.,* 2002; Mor Barak *et al.,* 2016; Phillips *et al.,* 2006) can serve as shared socio-demographic characteristics around which groups and interpersonal relationships are naturally formed. The challenge with demographic stereotyping is that it takes place in an extremely automatic fashion (Devine, 1989; Blair and Banaji, 1996). An individual normally turns to stereotyping in order to simplify information processing, even if the previously acquired information might not apply (Kulik and Bainbridge, 2006). An interrelated concept to stereotyping is prejudice, which has been conceptualised as an attitude consisting of three components: cognitive component, the beliefs about a certain group; affective component, indicating dislike of the belief or even the group; and a behavioural component, which is an inclination to show negative behaviour towards the group (Dovidio *et al.*, 2010). When it comes to actual behaviour of discrimination, affective prejudices are a stronger drive than are cognitive stereotypes (Tropp and Pettigrew, 2005). Emotional prejudice takes place when feelings of disgust, envy, fear, anxiety, pity or resentment are then targeted at a certain group and lead to specific behaviours when interacting with members of this group (Fiske, 1998).

Individual processes of identification are motivated by emotional attachments they form based on group memberships (Shore *et al.*, 2011). These emotional attachments are reflections of different human needs, such as belongingness and distinctiveness, which influence group dynamics (Hornsey and Jetten, 2004; Brewer, 2012; Ormiston, 2015). One main theory that has shaped this research area is Brewer's Optimal Distinctiveness Theory, under which it is

posited that two contradicting needs govern individual memberships in social groups (Brewer, 1991, 2012). This theory is to do with how social identity and self-categorisation processes take place (Leonardelli, Pickett and Brewer, 2010). The first need is that of inclusion, which reflects the human need of belongingness, whilst the second is that of being distinct from other group members; the need of differentiation and uniqueness (Brewer, 1991). The philosophy of optimal distinctiveness draws upon social identity theory, which in turn, posits that individual identities go beyond idiosyncratic behaviours, memories and attitudes also to be formed based on collective attitudes, behaviours and memories of the groups individuals belong to (Hornsey and Jetten, 2004). These two emotions resemble opposing human needs, and the more one is fulfilled the more the other is activated. The consequence of these contradicting needs is that individuals develop the capacity to socially identify with distinctive groups, which eventually satisfies both needs simultaneously (Brewer, 1991, 2012). In other words, individuals satisfy the need for belonging by membership of a group, in general and the need for distinction is met by the collective distinctiveness of the group. One possibly problematic complexity that arises from the relation between individual and collective group identities is that within modern and complex society, individuals are faced with multiple group identities, of which each is optimal within a different context (Brewer, 2012). In this sense, individuals are categorised or differentiated through several, distinct and meaningful social dimensions, such as age, religion, political ideology, or stage of professional life and the variety of these dimensions prevents individuals from being categorised into strict in/ and out-groups (Brewer, 2012). Hence, both professional and social identities are pertinent for diversity research. The next section discusses the intersectionality of diversity dimensions or identities and reviews literature relevant for its integration in diversity research.

3.2 Intersectionality of Identities

Previous sections of the literature reviewed in this research has shown the challenges concerning diversity conceptualisations, the multiple contexts relevant for diversity research, and the relevance of the various identities held by individuals for the research and management of diversity. This section discusses intersections between the multiple social and professional identities/diversity dimensions. Diversity research has been criticised for its conception of diversity dimensions as singular and non-related. Instead of identifying the contextually salient diversity strands, the research focus has been predominantly on single dimensions of diversity (Siebers, 2009; Zanoni *et al.*, 2010; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). Moreover, diversity dimensions have frequently been studied in isolation of other dimensions and contextual factors (Linnehan and Konrad, 1999; Siebers, 2009; Zanoni *et al.*, 2010; Knights and Omanović, 2016). At any given point of time and place, structures of inequality can have different mechanisms, dynamics and consequences (Risman, 2004). Decontextualized and unidimensional diversity research can result in a false assumption of universalism of diversity dimensions (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012), which goes against the many calls for contextualised diversity research (Joshi and Roh, 2009; Hearn and Louvrier, 2015; Siebers, 2009). Hence, the context of research and potential overlaps or intersections between diversity dimensions require consideration. The implication of taking on intersectionality to study diversity has been addressed by many researchers (e.g. Hearn and Louvrier, 2015; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012; Zander, Zander, Gaffney, and Olsson, 2010). The structures and dynamics of inequality at the workplace are complex, as is the process of identity formation. Scholars have, thus, been challenging the unidimensional, independent and decontextualized approach to conceptualising identity (Del Toro and Yoshikawa, 2016). Intersectionality literature offers a unique approach to exploring the overlaps between diversity dimensions, such as gender, age, ethnicity and class (e.g. Duncan and Loretto, 2004; Goldberg *et al.*, 2004; Acker, 2006; Hancock, 2007; Griffiths and Moore, 2010). Social psychology scholars studying matters of identity, in particular, are calling for intersectional analysis of identity (Parent, DeBlaere and Moradi, 2013; Taksa, Powell and Jayasinghe, 2016).

The concept of intersectionality was coined by Crenshaw (1991), who argued that to consider the construction of the social world, multiple facets of identity must be studied. Intersectionality considers the consequences of belonging to various socially salient groups, such as gender, ethnicity, class, and age, simultaneously, and how this shapes a person's

experience of inequality (Nicolas, la Fuente and Fiske, 2017). The term originated in an attempt to denote the interplay between race and gender (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012), primarily to indicate how the inequality experiences of ethnic minority women were considerably different than those of white women (Crenshaw, 1991). Broadly defined, intersectionality refers to the notion that the different strands of identity, such age, gender and ethnicity interplay and shape social inequalities (Collins, 2015; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). Intersectionality research acknowledges that inequality rarely happens based on a single dimension of diversity (Collins and Bilge, 2016; Winker and Degele, 2011). Nonetheless, defining intersectionality in a clear and precise fashion is still in development; however, there is consensus regarding its general outline and what constitutes it (Collins, 2015). Collins and Chepp, (2013, p. 59) put forward the following working definition: "*intersectionality consists of an assemblage of ideas and practices that maintain that gender, race, class, sexuality, age, ethnicity, ability, and similar phenomena cannot be analytically understood in isolation from one another; instead, these constructs signal an intersecting constellation of power relationships that produce unequal material realities*". Similarly, Collins (2015, p. 2) stated that "*the term intersectionality references the critical insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but as reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social inequalities*". Intersectionality, thus, goes beyond its race-gender intersection and represents the acknowledgement of the interrelatedness of diversity dimensions and their simultaneous intertwined role in triggering inequality.

Intersectionality scholars are divided into those considering mainly gender and ethnicity through the focus on women of colour and those applying it to a wider scope of differences (Yuval-Davis, 2016). In diversity research, intersectionality has been applied and several dimension dyads have been studied: age, ethnicity and gender (Hanappi-Egger and Ortlieb, 2016); age and gender (Duncan and Loretto, 2004; Griffiths and Moore, 2010; Gander, 2014); gender, class and race (Acker, 2006); and sex and race (Graves and Powell, 2008). Additionally, intersections of race and gender are studied with regards to how they influence financial career outcomes (i.e. earnings gaps) (Tao, 2018). In short, intersectionality deals with the different social statuses an individual holds and the multiplicity of their influences on individual experiences of inequality (Crenshaw, 1991; Mccall, 2005; Zander *et al.*, 2010). Intersectionality allows for the consideration of the social context of power and inequality (Collins and Bilge, 2016). Intersections of identities are contextual, requiring the adoption of a relational approach to explore inequality based on political, economic, cultural, subjective and

experiential differentiation between individuals and groups (Levine-Rasky, 2011). The evolution of diversity both in practice and theory shows that it deals with differences, identities and categorisation processes (Hearn and Louvrier, 2015), and intersectionality offers a lens through which intersections and overlaps of said differences can be studied and should thus be an integral part of diversity research.

3.2.1 Complexity of Intersectionality

At the core of intersectionality lies the notion that inequality is not shaped by one single factor, but rather, by the dynamics between multiple factors, all mutually influencing each other (Collins and Bilge, 2016). Intersectionality literature shows it has been researched in three ways: as field of study in itself, as an analytical strategy for studying social inequality (e.g. Choo and Ferree 2010) and finally, as a critical practice within social justice projects (Collins, 2015). Intersectionality has been widely used as an analytical tool in gender studies and feminist research in recent years (e.g. Adib and Guerrier 2003; Brah and Phoenix 2004; Warner and Shields 2013; Shields 2008; Parent *et al.* 2013). Gender researchers in the fields of sociology and political sciences hold that intersectionality can be employed at the macro level to capture links between systems of oppression, such as gender, class and ethnicity (Mercer *et al.*, 2015). At the micro individual level, studying intersectionality captures the processes through which individuals occupy a social position within structures of oppression (Hurtado and Sinha, 2008; Mercer *et al.*, 2015). Such processes shape an individual's social relationships and the experience of her/his own identity (Mercer *et al.*, 2015). In terms of the scope of this research, intersectionality is considered at the individual level to analyse the contextual experience of diversity and identity.

To include intersectional analysis in research, Collins and Bilge (2016) have proposed six core concepts that shape intersectionality analysis: inequality, power, social justice, complexity, relationality and social context. Social inequality is considered a key pillar of intersectionality research and as abovementioned, the core belief of intersectionality scholars is that inequality rarely develops based on a single dimension of diversity (Winker and Degele, 2011).

Power is a central dimension when considering intersectionality; intersections of a person's identity dimensions constitute a system of power relations (Collins and Bilge, 2016). The way in which specific strands of difference influence an individual's power system is highly contextual: historical and political factors shape the intersectional analysis of power (Yuval-

Davis, 2011). Relationality pertains to considering the interconnectedness of dimensions, such as race and gender, instead of what distinguishes them (Collins and Bilge, 2016). Intersectionality, thus, represents an analytic shift towards the multiplication of inequality strands, instead of a simplistic addition of them (Choo and Ferree, 2010). Moreover, the social context or contextualisation of the power systems and social inequalities is a key consideration in intersectionality research (Collins and Bilge, 2016). In sum, the intersectionality perspective allows for consideration of multiple diversity dimensions and their overlaps, whilst acknowledging the contextual nature of diversity (Levine-Rasky, 2011).

Complexity is a key consideration of intersectionality research. Whilst intersectionality mainly involves understanding the interactions between gender, race and class, the concept allows for the integration of other socially defined categories of differences, such as age or nationality (Winker and Degele, 2011). Consideration of inequality, power, relationality and social context renders the analysis complex (Collins and Bilge, 2016). In addition to intersectionality being about studying the complexity of the social world, it is – in itself – a complex construct (Collins and Bilge, 2016). The most comprehensive analysis of the complexity of intersectionality was offered by McCall (2005), who identified three main approaches to it. At one end of the continuum, anti-categorical complexity refers to deconstructing categories based on the belief that the social world is too complex to allow for the categorisation of individuals (ibid). The approach is used to deconstruct categories to capture the dynamic nature of differences (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012), with the focus lying on the process through which categories and labels are socially constructed (Winker and Degele, 2011). At the other end of the continuum, the inter-categorical approach requires researchers to adopt provisional existing categories to document the inequalities between those groups and to challenge the configurations of inequality amongst multiple dimensions (McCall, 2005). In other words, this means strategically adopting categories in order to explore social inequalities between certain groups (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). Thus, this approach is concerned with the relationship between categories and is often used in quantitative research (Winker and Degele, 2011). The third approach is considered a balancing point between the other two approaches; researchers adopting this approach focus on uncovering the complexity of lived experiences among members of groups whose identities cross boundaries of traditionally constructed groups (McCall, 2005). The approach acknowledges the significance of relationships between social categories and at the same time adopts a critical stance towards categories (ibid). Under this lens, methods such as case studies, ethnography and narrative research, are often used when

conducting intersectional research within the scope of this approach (Winker and Degele, 2011). This research falls into the third approach, wherein diversity categories are acknowledged but do not fully shape analysis.

3.2.2 Linking Intersectionality and Identity Research

Integrating identity theory and intersectionality to study diversity and identities has been advocated by researchers in the fields of diversity and psychology, specifically those studying matters of identity (Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach, 2008; Shields, 2008; Warner, 2008; Parent, DeBlaere and Moradi, 2013). The two approaches both involve exploring categories of identities, their multiple levels (group and individual) and relations amongst those categories (Taksa, Powell and Jayasinghe, 2016). However, several scholars, specifically in psychology research, have been encouraging the study of identity strands (gender, class, ethnicity, etc.) from an intersectionality perspective, whilst acknowledging theories of identity formation (Shields, 2008; Cole, 2009; Griffith, 2012; Warner and Shields, 2013). Despite these multiple calls, researchers state that the integration of social identity theory and intersectionality is more rarely done than the employment of each independently (Taksa, Powell, and Jayasinghe, 2016).

In psychology research, scholars have been dedicating increasing attention to the influence of socio-demographic attributes, such as gender, class, ethnicity and sexuality, on outcomes such as wellbeing and health, identity and political participation (Cole, 2009; Griffith, 2012; Warner and Shields, 2013). In this light, several central issues fundamentally need addressing to fulfil the purpose of studying intersectionality in a psychology context. For example, Cole (2009) suggests that psychologists need to ask three questions in order to address intersectionality: which categories are included in the study, how inequality is addressed and identifying commonalities between studied social categories or groups. In a more practical sense, Warner (2008) addresses three aspects to facilitate the research of intersectionality. The author first discusses criteria to decide which diversity strands (social categories) to include in research (Warner, 2008). It is almost impossible to include all aspects by which individuals can differ from one another (Young, 1994) and hence, there is no expectation of researchers to include all dimensions that constitute identity (Warner, 2008). In this light, it is important that researchers acknowledge the reasons as to why certain dimensions are addressed and others not (Warner, 2008) and that whilst some dimensions such as religion are relevant at certain historical moments, others, such as gender are universally salient (Phoenix, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2016). In sum, the rationale for including the dimensional aspect in each specific research

context becomes clear. To facilitate the selection of dimensions, Warner (2008, p. 462), concludes by stating that researchers need to focus on "*making decision rules and assumptions explicit*". Secondly, the question of focusing on master identity categories, such race or gender, versus focusing on their emerging intersections, is addressed (Mccall, 2005; Warner, 2008). In this vein, gender is a master identity category encompassing roles developed socially based on biological attributes (sex), and class is a also such a category defined by economic status (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Researchers have proposed considering both master identity categories and emerging intersectional categories (Risman, 2004; Bowleg, 2008).

The third aspect discussed by Warner (2008) addresses the perception of identity by psychology researchers. The author states that researchers "*largely considered identity as a stable group of traits, which has kept them from being able to take advantage of the ways that couching identity within social structural contexts can facilitate the research process*" (Warner, 2008, p. 462). The importance of acknowledging the social structural systems that maintain the formation of identities in intersectional research is stressed (Collins, 1990). Thus, it is important to perceive identity as a social structural process, for in this case identity is conceptualised along institutions, and social structures and intersections of identity categories can be captured (Warner, 2008). Finally, it must be noted that the selection of a priori categories to study does not necessarily reflect the categories shaping the research experience (Warner, 2008).

The dimensions selected play a historical role with regards to issues of discrimination, for instance, recalling the origin of diversity in the organisational context in response to women's and minority rights issues (Maltbia and Power, 2009). In intersectionality research, gender, class and race are perceived as three major dimensions to consider (Yuval-Davies, 2006). In conclusion, social psychology research addresses the application of intersectionality research in a practical sense and discusses how researchers take decisions on which identity and diversity dimensions to include in their research. Additionally, it is acknowledged that processes triggered by the categorisation and diversity dimensions can influence the psychological state of wellbeing of individuals. One aim of the current research, is to ensure appropriate contextualisation throughout the research process and avoiding pre-selection of diversity dimensions (identity categories).

3.3 Chapter Summary: Identity and Intersectionality

The essence of diversity, as illustrated in chapter two, is about human differences. To consider individual's perceptions of differences and similarities, in this chapter the literature on identity construction and intersectionality has been reviewed. This has been undertaken by considering social identities, identity in terms of 'who' a person is and professional role identity, identity in terms of 'what' a person does. Social Identity Theory postulates that individuals construct their identities in relation to others in their social contexts. That is, they construct their identities according to their demographics and based on perceived differences and similarities to others. Individual needs to construct positive or favourable identities dominate processes of identity construction. Role identity pertains to an individual's professional role. It has been suggested that individuals construct their professional identities in light of characteristics associated with their careers. Both theoretical lenses considered hold that individuals form their identities in relation to the social groups around them. The socio-psychological processes underlying identity construction are closely related to diversity research. That is, stereotyping, prejudice and resulting discrimination are all processes which shape how individuals construct their identities. Hence, both social and professional role identities are adopted as a basis for how individuals construct meanings of diversity. Intersectionality considers the interrelatedness of diversity or identity dimensions. Research on it has highlighted the complex and contextual nature of inequality, suggesting that experiencing inequality is rarely the product of single diversity dimensions, but rather, individuals are subjected to it based on the multiple social identities they hold. Considering intersectionality results in a level of complexity faced by the researcher. This complexity concerns decisions surrounding categorisation: namely, which intersections of diversity dimensions to include. Whilst several approaches exist, in this research, categories traditionally related to inequality are acknowledged and addressed, but are not the exclusive focus of the intersectional analysis.

The literature reviewed in this chapter has shown the increasing attention being paid to individual identity processes in organisations and highlights the increasing consideration of intersectionality by social psychology identity researchers. Thus, in this chapter, the need for a social psychology informed analysis of diversity by considering individual social identities and role identity has been argued for. In addition, the lack of consideration of social identities and intersectionality simultaneously motivates the research aim to integrate both perspectives and investigate the intersectionality between the multiple social and professional identities individuals hold.

Part Two: Methodological Considerations

Chapter 4: Conceptual Framework and Research Objectives

Introduction to the Chapter

The literature outlined in chapters two and three calls for contextualised, multi-dimensional and comparative diversity research. Accordingly, a relational approach to studying diversity perceptions across Egypt, Germany and the United Kingdom is chosen for this research. The chapter starts by presenting the rationale for a relational approach and explaining the adoption of a perceptual approach to diversity. This is followed by an illustration of the conceptual framework. It concludes by laying out the research aim, objectives and questions.

4.1 A Relational Framework of Diversity Perceptions

Building on the discussion of the literature in the previous two chapters, several challenges are raised. With regards to conceptualisations of diversity, a unified understanding of what it constitutes and which dimensions need to be included in the construct is lacking (Cox and Nkomo, 1990; Holvino and Kamp, 2009; Ahonen *et al.*, 2014). While the meaning of diversity is contextually positioned, prior research, to a great extent, has ignored contextual factors (Hearn and Louvrier, 2015). That is, these factors have either been disregarded (Linnehan and Konrad, 1999; Siebers, 2009; Zanoni *et al.*, 2010; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012; Knights and Omanović, 2016) or their influence on diversity outcomes is only partly understood (Zanoni *et al.*, 2010; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012; Knights and Omanović, 2016).

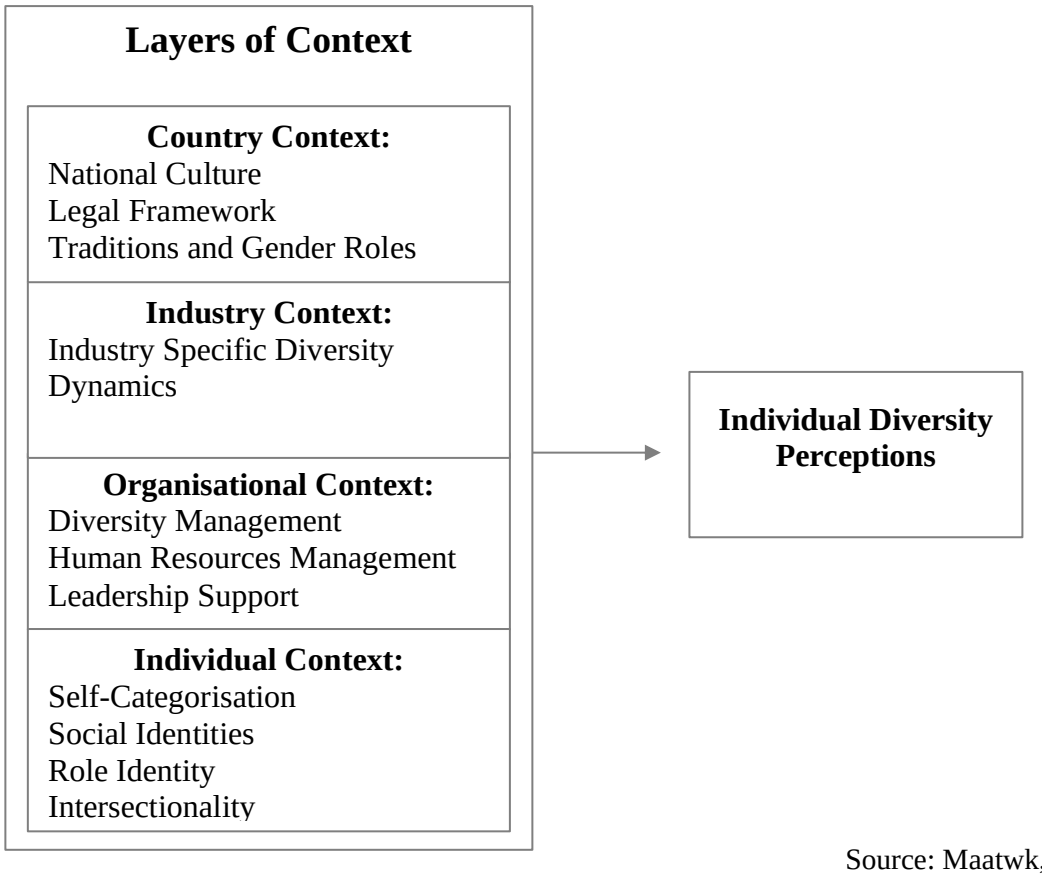
When diversity is considered from an individual perception perspective, the focus is on how individuals perceive themselves as similar or different to others (Hobman, Bordia and Gallois, 2004; Van der Vegt and Van de Vliert, 2005). Perceived diversity reflects the notion that "*team diversity owes its influence to the eye of the beholder*" (Van der Vegt andVan de Vliert, 2005, p. 84). The perceptual consideration of diversity refers to a multiple attribute approach; thus, the construct of diversity is inclusive of multiple dimensions simultaneously (Qin, Muenjohn and Chhetri, 2014). Consideration of perceived diversity serves several purposes. Diversity is, on the one hand, acknowledged as a dynamic, context-specific construct (Shemla *et al.*, 2016), whilst on the other hand, the interrelatedness of individual, group and organisational levels is acknowledged in the perception approach to diversity (Frable, 1997; Hobman, Bordia and Gallois, 2004; Qin, Muenjohn and Chhetri, 2014). Diversity within this stance is thus explored with a focus on the individual within a group (Tsui and O'Reilly, 1989). That is, the perception of differences by individuals is considered based on self-categorisation processes and group

identification (Qin, Muenjohn and Chhetri, 2014). In addition, this allows consideration of the subjectivity of diversity as a phenomenon, which is pointed to by several diversity definitions (i.e. Harrison *et al.*, 2002; van Knippenberg *et al.*, 2004; Mor Barak, 2016). Perceived diversity has received less attention in research than actual objective diversity (Hentschel *et al.*, 2013). And there is generally a dearth of research that considers how contextual factors influence individuals perceptions' of diversity (Roberson, 2013). The core belief underlying perceived diversity is that individuals actions are influenced by their perceptions of reality, rather than an objective reality per se (Shemla *et al.*, 2016), whilst recent research indicates that the two constructs, actual and perceived diversity, are significantly positively related (Jaiswal and Dyaram, 2018). The perceptual approach specifies that individuals must be acknowledged as a whole with regards to their multiple identities, which are multidimensional, fluid, contextual and personalised social constructions (Frable, 1997). The saliency of diversity dimensions is, hence, contextual and what is perceived as a dimension differentiating one person from another is situational (Chatman and O'Reilly, 2004; Hobman, Bordia and Gallois, 2004). A recent review of perceived diversity literature shows three distinct conceptualisations of the construct (Shemla *et al.*, 2016). The first assumes it to be an operationalisation of and substitute for, objective diversity (Shemla *et al.*, 2016). However, this perspective can result in an incomplete understanding of diversity, as individuals might not possess sufficient information to assess it (Harrison and Klein, 2007). The second approach defines perceived diversity as a mediator between group performance and objective diversity (Shemla *et al.*, 2016). It is assumed that, if differences are unnoticed by group members, the likelihood of them influencing team behaviour is diminished (Zellmer-Bruhn *et al.*, 2008). The third conceptualisation of perceived diversity considers it as being independent from objective group composition, i.e. perceived diversity is considered "*the mental representation of a group composition that may or may not be associated with actual composition and that may differ between individuals, contingent on their goals, status, personality, and attitudes. In other words, this conceptualization characterizes perceived diversity as a dynamic and context-dependent construct*" (Shemla *et al.*, 2016, p.98-99). For this research the third conceptualisation is adopted, as it is consistent with investigating what individuals perceive to constitute differences and similarities amongst them.

The contexts within which perceived diversity is conceptualised encompass several layers: national culture, industry/sector, organisation and identity. Experiences of discrimination are embedded in the particularities of an industry or occupation (Öztürk and Tatli, 2016), with different contexts resulting in unique diversity dynamics (Tatli, 2011). While diversity research has been conducted for different levels (individual, group/team/unit, and organisation), there have been few studies bridging these (Joshi, Liao and Roh, 2011). Adopting a relational approach "*may offer a context-specific alternative to the single-level studies which tend to be a feature of the ethnocentric and purist traditions of research*" (Syed and Özbilgin, 2009, p. 2437). A relational approach is consistent with the aims of this research, given its comparative nature, its premise of the interplay, the intersubjectivity and the interdependence amongst individual and organisational phenomena (Özbilgin, 2006). Additionally, a relational exploration overcomes the limitation of diversity conceptualisations caused by their being developed in single country contexts or shaped by an organisational mono-cultural dominance (Nishii and Özbilgin, 2007; Syed and Özbilgin, 2009). In short, the relational approach is appropriate for exploring diversity perceptions, because the perception model assumes a contextual nature of diversity as well as the interrelatedness of individual, group and/or organisational levels (Frable, 1997; Hobman, Bordia and Gallois, 2004; Qin, Muenjohn and Chhetri, 2014).

In line with several relational diversity studies (i.e. Syed and Özbilgin, 2009; Syed, Burke and Acar, 2010; Hennekam, Tahssain-Gay and Syed, 2017; Syed and Ali, 2019), context is conceptualised on three levels or layers: macro national, meso industry and organizational, and micro individual contexts. The macro level relates to the legal, socio-cultural and religious structures, as well as race and gender relations (Syed and Özbilgin, 2009; Hennekam, Tahssain-Gay and Syed, 2017). The meso level involves assessing organisations' diversity management approach in light of national context influences, such as labour law regulations and social values (Syed and Ali, 2019). The micro level focuses on the individuals as part of the structures they exist within. This acknowledges the multiple and intersecting identities, and the subjectivity of individual employment experiences and societal contexts (Syed and Özbilgin, 2009). Accordingly, a relational approach to diversity perceptions addresses four layers of context: national culture (macro level), industry and organisation contexts (meso level) and individual identities (micro level). In the following, the conceptual basis of the research is illustrated and summarised. Figure 1 below depicts the conceptualisation of context that guides the research.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Contexts Influencing Individual Diversity Perceptions



Source: Maatwk, 2020

For this research, individual diversity perceptions are investigated. Individual perceptions of what constitutes diversity; on what basis they perceive themselves as different or similar to others, is explored. The influence of context on how individuals form their diversity understandings is a key exploration of this research. The above illustration shows the adopted conceptualisation of context. As abovementioned, diversity perceptions are situated within four layers of context: country, industry, organisation, and individual. At country level, the influence of national culture, its legal framework, and social values and norms on diversity perceptions are explored. At the industry level, the industry-specific diversity dynamics are taken into consideration. The organisational level encompasses diversity management practices and the organisation's diversity rhetoric (as communicated by leadership communication on diversity). Finally, the individual level context includes social identities relating to both visible demographical dimensions (age, gender, ethnicity, etc.) and less visible ones (religion, class, education, etc.) as well as role identities, which refers to individuals' sense of who they are based on their professional background. Additionally, the individual level considers intersectionality amongst the diversity dimensions. The main focus of the analysis is

the individual perception of diversity formed by the macro, meso and micro levels of context, That is, perceived diversity is explored as a construct mediated by the factors functioning at each of the above illustrated layers of context. Table 1 below summarises the conceptual approach and theoretical lenses adopted to fulfil the research aim and objectives. Each level is listed with regards to elements included in and theoretical lenses adopted to conceptualise it. Additionally, the scope within which this research is undertaken and the focus of the analysis are specified.

Table 1: Summary of Conceptual Approach and Analytical Focus

Level of Analysis	***Elements***	***Theoretical Lens***	***Scope of Research***	***Analytical Focus***
Macro: National Culture	Legal Framework, Historical Conditions, Social Traditions, Gender Roles and Structures.	Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions, Cultural Tightness-Looseness Theory, World Values Survey, Socio-Political Dynamics.	Egypt, Germany, United Kingdom.	Diversity Attitudes and Perceptions as Mediated by National Context.
Meso: Industry and Organisation	Industry Diversity Dynamics, Organisational Diversity Management Policies, HR Policies, Organisational Leadership.	Diversity Management Literature at Industry and Organisational Level.	Technology Industry, Multinational Organisations working across Cultures.	Implementation of diversity management and individual reaction to and perception of diversity management practices.
Micro: Individual Identity	Identity Construction Processes.	Social Identity Theory, Role Identity Theory, and Intersectionality.	Social identities, self-categorisation engineers and managers, Employees and managers, Intersectionality.	Individual perceptions of similarities and differences between themselves and others.

As aforementioned, the macro level of analysis refers to the cultural context of the country within which the organisations operate. The legal framework, such as labour laws, for example, influence the implementation of diversity management policies. Additionally, a country's

historical, and socio-political dynamics impact upon the dynamics relating to diversity, in particular, with regards to ethnic and class related diversity. In addition, cultural gender roles and structures influence gender equality. The research takes place in three countries: Egypt, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Hence, it offers a unique perspective given that a Middle Eastern culture is compared to two Western ones.

The meso level of analysis includes both the industry and organisational contexts. The industry's diversity dynamics and organisational diversity management policies as well as leadership commitment to diversity are explored in terms of their influence on diversity perceptions. The technology industry offers an interesting setting to study diversity, especially given its lack of both gender and ethnic diversity. Individual perceptions of organisational diversity management are explored at the meso level, in terms of awareness of policies and perception of their effectiveness. The organisations included in this research are multinational ones working in technologies, with specialisations such as telecommunications, software development, information technology services, or technology hardware manufacturing.

At the individual level, social identities, role identities, and intersectionality are explored. The saliency of diversity dimensions for construction of identities is investigated. Accordingly, processes of self-categorisation and self-identification are probed. The key focus lies in how and why individuals perceive themselves as similar or different to others in their work context. Finally, intersections between identity dimensions are probed by capturing the experiences of individuals who represent several non-mainstream social groups.

In sum, the novelty of this research is its focus on how the abovementioned levels of context influence individual diversity perceptions. It investigates the influence of country culture, sectoral dynamics, organisational culture and individual professions on the individual's perceptions of diversity. The research aim, objectives and questions are discussed in the next section.

4.2 Research Objectives and Questions

Building on the analysis of the literature, this study is aimed at contributing to the understanding of how context shapes diversity perceptions. This involves exploring perceptions of diversity on three analytical levels. The table below lists the research objectives and the respective research questions. The philosophical research underpinnings and research methods adopted to address these questions are discussed in the next chaper.

Table 2: Research Objectives and Respective Research Questions

Research Aim *This research is aimed at conceptualising diversity perceptions of employees in the technology industry in Egypt, Germany and the United Kingdom through the exploration of relational influences of context at the levels of country, industry, organisation and identity.*	
Research Objectives	**Research Questions**
(1) Analysis of Contextual Layers: Identify the mechanisms by which context influences diversity perceptions at the national, industry and organisational levels.	(a) How does the national culture influence diversity perceptions? (b) How does the nature of the technology industry influence individual perception and experience of diversity? (c) How do the organisational diversity management practices influence diversity perceptions?
(2) Analysis of Identity Construction Processes: Identify elements salient to role and social identity construction.	(a) Which dimensions constitute professional identities in the technology industry? (b) What role does gender play in the process of professional identity construction? (c) How do individuals construct their social identities in relation to others? (d) How do individuals define similarities and differences between themselves and others?
(3) Intersectionality Analysis Identify how intersections of diversity dimensions influence experiences of diversity and equality.	(a) How do professional identities and social identities interplay in the workplace? (b) How do individuals representing multiple identity intersections experience their identity at work?

4.3 Chapter Summary: Conceptual Framework

In this chapter, the case for a relational conceptualisation of perceived diversity has been explained and justified. Individual diversity perceptions are explored in relation to the national culture a person exists within, their working context, and their multiple identities and the intersectionality between them. The contingent and multidimensional nature of diversity as a construct have been acknowledge. The focus of research is to capture how these layers of context influence diversity constructions. The fieldwork pertains to the Egyptian, German and UK technology industries, with employees of multinational organisations being interviewed. This allows for the consideration of both national culture differences and industry influences on diversity perceptions.

The conceptual framework presented in this chapter details how the macro, meso and micro levels are theorised in this research. To frame the analysis at the macro level Hofstede's dimensions, cultural tightness-looseness, and the World Values Survey are adopted, as well as a profile of each country's history and socio-political dynamics being provided. The meso level covers diversity management, organisational culture and diversity in the relevant technology literature to situate diversity perceptions theoretically. Finally, for the micro level, diversity is conceptualised through social identity theory, role identity and intersectionality. The chapter was concluded by presenting the research aim, objectives and questions, which paves the way for the explanation of the methodological underpinning for this work in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Methodology: Philosophical Underpinnings and Research Methods

Introduction to Chapter

Diversity perceptions lie at the core of this research. The research aim is to explore how individual diversity perceptions are shaped by three layers of context. This chapter discusses the research philosophy and methodology adopted to fulfil this research aim. The ontological and epistemological underpinnings shape the choice of research methods. The chapter, thus, starts with a discussion of qualitative and quantitative diversity research. The choice of a qualitative paradigm and an interpretivist social constructionism philosophy is then justified. The appropriateness of social constructionism, referring to the belief that reality is socially constructed by individuals (Creswell, 2014), is explained. The influence of context on individual diversity perceptions is considered a process of meaning making, which takes place individually. The critical role of individuals as social actors in this philosophy (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2016) makes it appropriate for the research aims. An in-depth discussion of the research design is provided, which includes: details of the field work, the data collection phases and strategy as well as the interview details. Details on interviewee backgrounds and the interview themes/topics are provided. The data analysis and coding processes are then discussed, with the ethical research considerations also being covered. Finally, the chapter concludes by explaining the concept of reflexivity as applied by this researcher

5.1 Diversity Research: Qualitative versus Quantitative Approaches

Social sciences are dominated by quantitative research methods; however, the introduction of a variety of qualitative research approaches and the development of methodological reflexivity has highly enriched the field (Jovanović, 2011). A profound understanding of research methodologies applicable to the social research world is essential for selecting an appropriate one and the associated methods (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, and Griffin, 2013). In diversity research, both quantitative as well as qualitative methods have been adopted to study the phenomenon. This section provides a brief discussion of the nature of each stream and is followed by discourse on the interpretivist social constructionism philosophy shaping this research. For this research, the critical diversity literature's understanding of the term as being non-positivist and non-essentialist is adopted. The stance taken presumes that diversity

research must be inclusive of various context specific socio-demographic identities that are continuously produced and reproduced (Zanoni *et al.,* 2010). The qualitative versus quantitative debate in diversity research is dominated by positivist research (Janssens and Zanoni, 2014; McMahon, 2010). Knights and Omanović (2015) observe that the three most adopted paradigms are: positivism, as the most dominant, the critical tradition, which rejects the natural sciences model and the descriptive nature of interpretivism, being the least dominant, which is situated in between the previous two.

Positivist research in diversity has been pursued in different ways. One body of research has involved addressing the measurement of diversity indices. For instance, Chrobot-Mason *et al.* (2006), review five research domains measuring diversity related indices: organisation climate, discrimination and harassment, organisation practices, social identification, and diversity readiness and resistance. The authors conclude by stating that "*the degree to which many of the variables accurately and reliably measure their underlying constructs is limited*" (Chrobot-Mason *et al.,* 2006). Additionally, it is stressed that changing social norms, taboos as well as social desirability has resulted in limited accuracy and reliability of the developed measures (ibid). Another stream of positivist diversity research focuses on the influences of diversity among employees with respect to their characteristics or dimensions (such as gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation and nationality) on certain outcomes such as innovation (Hewlett, Marshall, and Sherbin, 2013; Van der Vegt and Janssen, 2003), and team dynamics (Kearney, Gebert, and Voelpel, 2009; Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt and Jonsen, 2010). Frequently, the motivation fuelling positivist diversity investigation is to identify human differences between individuals (such as age, race, gender, ethnicity), in addition to behavioural differences (such as values and attitudes) in the light of certain traditional organisational concepts, such as leadership, teamwork, strategy and organisational commitment (Knights and Omanović, 2015).

A qualitative approach allows research subjects to 'speak for themselves' (Kamenou, 2007). It is a process that seeks to explore and understand the meanings and values individuals attribute to a specific social problem or phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). In diversity literature, qualitative or interpretivist research methods have a different focus to quantitative ones. For example, whilst much positivist research focuses on measuring diversity and its effects, interpretivist research seeks to understand the meaning of diversity (Knights and Omanović, 2015). Different concepts shape this process of understanding diversity, with researchers

often drawing upon sensemaking to capture its meaning (Roberson and Stevens, 2006; Tomlinson and Egan, 2002; Warren, Ballenger, Ogonowski, Rosebery, and Hudicourt-Barnes, 2001). For instance, qualitative methods have added value to diversity research through the analysis of two strongly related concepts: organisational culture and systemic discrimination (Thurlow, Mills, and Mills, 2006). Interpretivist research can add depth to the understanding of certain social phenomena. In short, interpretivist researchers "*are interested in documenting and studying how participants perceive, understand, interpret, or make sense of diversity*" (Knights and Omanović, 2015, p. 92). The aim of this research is to explore the meaning of diversity as a socially constructed concept embedded within various layers of context. Correspondingly, an interpretivist social constructionism epistemology that involves applying qualitative data collection and analysis methods is deemed appropriate to fulfil this objective. Qualitative methods capture differences in the way individuals make sense of the same event, whilst also acknowledging the complexity and the context in which the research takes place (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The next section discusses the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of this research.

5.2 Ontological and Epistemological Underpinnings

The researcher's epistemological and ontological decisions are shaped by her/his background assumptions and the subject matter under investigation (House, 1994). It is important for researchers to reflect carefully on their methodological beliefs, as these shape their research questions, the selected methods and interpretation of the findings (Crotty, 1998). In general, a paradigm encompasses a set of beliefs that guide certain actions (Guba, 1990). Research paradigms have been referred to as worldviews, indicating the researcher's philosophical orientation about the world and her/his reflection on the research, which pertains to her/his experience and the studied discipline (Creswell, 2014). Denzin and Lincoln (2013) sum up a paradigm as an umbrella encompassing the researcher's epistemological, ontological and methodological stances. Additionally, a research paradigm can be described as "*a way of thinking about and making sense of the complexities of the real world.[…] Paradigms tell us what is important, legitimate and reasonable"* (Patton, 2015, p. 89). Or in a more practical sense, a paradigm is "*the set of common beliefs and agreements shared between scientists about how problems should be understood and addressed*" (Kuhn, 1962, p. 45).

In a nutshell, the research paradigm underpins all the methodological beliefs and choices of the researcher. For this research, an in-depth, contextually-sensitive and holistic understanding of diversity perceptions is sought by adopting a qualitative research paradigm (Patton, 2015).

The rationale for choosing a social constructionist approach lies in the nature of the constructs studied. Diversity perceptions are researched here in relation to culture, industry and organisations as well as identity. All these phenomena are socially constructed and subjective in meaning. Hence, the constructionist epistemology fits the nature of this research. Social identity theory posits that group memberships and relationships influence the process of identity creation (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), which means that identity construction is influenced by shared meanings of the groups a person belongs to. These meanings and associations pertaining to certain groups (i.e. women, engineers, etc.) are socially constructed and shared. Ontological stance refers to the researcher's assumptions about reality, whilst the epistemological perspective is about the assumptions held regarding human knowledge (Saunders *et al.,* 2016), as explained in detail below.

Ontology refers to "*the worldviews and assumptions in which researchers operate in their search for new knowledge*" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 190). Similarly, Saunders *et al.* (2016) describe ontology as the researcher's assumptions about the nature of reality. The ontological roots of positivism are embedded in objectivism. At the extreme, objectivism assumes that physical and social phenomena exist independently, are universal and are enduring in nature (Saunders *et al.,* 2016). As such, the social world is considered to be made up of the major social structures individuals are born into (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Positivism has been referred to as doing scientific research (Creswell, 2014), or adopting the viewpoints of natural scientists (Saunders *et al.,* 2016). According to the positivist and post-positivist stances, knowledge is created based on accurate observation and measurement of the objective reality and human behaviour (Creswell, 2014). The process of this research paradigm involves developing hypotheses based on existing theory, which are either confirmed or refuted. The resulting data is then used to develop the theory further (Saunders *et al.,* 2016). Furthermore, the independence of the researchers from the research process and the assumption of their neither influencing nor being influenced by the subject of the research characterise the positivist research approach (Remenyi, Williams, Money, and Swartz, 1998). In other words, it is important that researchers are objective and the research process must be tested for bias

(Creswell, 2014). From an ontological perspective, positivism is rooted in the belief that there is one single reality that can be studied and measured. Hence, research under this paradigm has the purpose of predicting and controlling nature (Guba and Lincoln, 2011). The current research involved studying people's perceptions and experiences of diversity as being context driven. A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for conducting it, as explained and justified below.

At the other end of the ontological continuum lies subjectivism. Subjectivist ontology adopts the philosophy that reality is built based on the perceptions and actions of social actors (Saunders *et al.*, 2016), under which it is assumed that multiple realities can exist (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). This ontological position embraces two stances; in its extreme form, nominalism holds that social phenomena are perceived differently by each individual (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). A less extreme form is expressed by social constructionism, where it is assumed that "*reality is constructed through social interaction in which social actors create partially shared meanings and realities*" (Saunders *et al.*, 2016, p. 130). The ontological philosophy of subjectivism in the form of social constructionism is adopted to address the questions posed in this research.

5.2.1 Social Constructionism

Interpretivism is often combined with constructivism or social constructionism (Creswell, 2014). Under this paradigm, the notion that individuals create meanings is adopted and hence, the social world cannot be studied in the same manner as natural sciences or physical phenomena (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). This philosophical stance implies that individuals in different contexts, at different times and from different cultural backgrounds create different meanings (ibid). Moreover, social constructivists believe that human beings are on the search for an understanding of the world they exist in and that the obtained knowledge or understanding of the world is subjective in nature (Creswell, 2014). As such, individuals are continuously attempting to understand the world around them and then, they subjectively interpret their experiences (Crotty, 1998; Guba, Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba, 2011; Mertens, 2010). The social aspect of constructivism reflects the notion that meanings created by individuals are based on their interactions with others (Creswell, 2014). As such, the application of identity theories, which assume individuals construct their identities in relation to others in their social and professional contexts is appropriate for a social constructionist research philosophy.

The main difference between constructionist and constructivist research lies in the focus of meaning creation: constructivism considers the individual mind as the source, whilst constructionism includes the influence of social settings or other individuals in the process of meaning making (Crotty, 1998). One main issue regarding interpretivism or constructionism is the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the research subjects, topics and results. The values and beliefs of researchers adopting this philosophy, thus, play a significant role in the research process (Saunders et al., 2016). To ensure research trustworthiness, subsection 5.2.2 addresses Lincoln and Guba's (1968) criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

The ontological basis of the adopted social constructionist approach is of a relativist nature, which means that realities are based on social and experiential constructs as they are experienced by individuals, thus resulting in multiple mental constructs (Guba, 1990). Knowledge is constructed through two main processes: lived experiences of individuals and their interaction with others in their surroundings (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). Moreover, the epistemological roots of this paradigm are that knowledge is created based on the interaction between the researchers and the research subjects (Guba, 1990). The potential for researcher bias can be addressed and minimised by applying trustworthiness criteria (Lincoln and Guba, 1986), and reflexivity (Berger, 2015), as was the case here. Methodologically, this philosophy relies on naturalistic methods, such as observation, interviewing and analysis of already existing texts, which typically requires the use of qualitative methods (Angen, 2000). Finally, different approaches to theory creation have been forwarded: induction, abduction and deduction (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). The approach applied to conduct this research is of an inductive nature. Induction refers to the process through which individuals reflect on their experiences of social phenomena and use their explanations to form guiding principles or abstract rules (Kolb, Rubin, and McIntyre, 1979).

Similarly to the rivalry between quantitative and qualitative methods, a fierce ongoing debate between induction and deduction proponents exists (Johnson and Duberley, 2000). Two key arguments in favour of induction justify its significance for social sciences (Johnson, 2004). Firstly, the close link between theory building and data collection make the explanations reached for social phenomena more plausible and accessible (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Secondly, since social actors have subjective capabilities, it is important that social science

research inductively generates explanations (or theory) by understanding the interpretations and experiences of the actors being studied (Gill and Johnson, 2002; Johnson, 2004). Hence, considering the subjective nature of diversity (Hearn and Louvrier, 2015), it is important to capture the interpretations and experiences of the involved individuals when studying it. Context-specific induction relies on the researcher's reflexive accounts and on providing contextual details which allow the establishment of empirical authenticity (Ketokivi and Mantere, 2010), both of which are followed in this research.

5.2.2 Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research

Consideration of the trustworthiness of qualitative research methods is a key element of the research process. Positivists question the trustworthiness of such research, because the concepts of reliability and validity are not applicable similarly to how they apply to quantitative research (Shenton, 2004). So, qualitative research needs to be evaluated using different criteria (Bryman, 2012). The main difference between the two approaches lies in the confirmatory nature (testing hypotheses and theory) of quantitative research, versus the exploratory nature of qualitative research (understanding experiences and individual perspectives) (Antwi and Kasim, 2015). To ensure trustworthiness of this research, Lincoln and Guba's (2007) four suggested criteria were followed by the researcher. In addition, the constructionist nature and the subjectivity of the researcher (Patton, 2015) are acknowledged. The role of the researcher is reflected upon in the reflexivity section of this chapter (see section 5.8).

Credibility can be achieved through *prolonged engagement* of the researcher with both the phenomena investigated and the research respondents along with the *persistent observation* of the salient constructs identified throughout the engagement (Lincoln and Guba, 1986). The credibility of this research was ensured by conducting data collection over a prolonged period of time. The first pilot study was conducted in December 2016 and January 2017, data from which was analysed to identify the concepts relevant for the main study. The second pilot was conducted in March 2018 and finally the main study across Egypt, Germany and the UK was conducted from April to October 2018. The lengthy period of data collection allowed the researcher to be constantly engaged with the research participants. Additionally, the time period made space for constant reflexivity by the researcher and observation of the diversity dynamics in the research countries and in the technology industry. Another measure for credibility is offered through triangulation (Bryman, 2012). Collecting data from multiple

perspectives – HR, line managers and employees – strengthened the credibility of the analysis process. By collecting data from both managers and employees, two different perspectives were captured and "*Each data point represents different data of the same event; discovering commonalities within dissimilar settings.*" (Fusch, Fusch, and Ness, 2018, p. 22). Accordingly, credibility was ensured through both prolonged engagement and triangulation.

Transferability relates to generalisability and the extent to which the research pertains to other contexts or individuals and groups (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Generalisability in quantitative research refers to the research findings being pertinent to other cases, whereas in qualitative research its essence is the degree to which the research findings are useful to others. That is, qualitative researchers relate their participants' perspectives, without claiming universality of these (Conelley, 2016). This study aims to reveal individual diversity perceptions in certain contexts, rather than providing generalisability. To ensure transferability, Lincoln and Guba (1986) recommend providing a rich description of the research context, which allows others to make judgements about the fit or similarity of the research to different settings. Accordingly, a rich description of each contextual layer is provided in the respective empirical chapters. In chapter 6, the country context for each of Egypt, Germany and the UK is described in-depth. The country cultures are discussed based on the values of Hofstede's dimensions, cultural tightness looseness theory and the World Values Theory. Additionally, a country profile indicating unique aspects about the country's history, legal framework, and socio-cultural dynamics is provided. In chapter 7, the context for diversity management is discussed by providing key insights of diversity dynamics in the technology industry, with the nature of the work and key information about the organisations included. Finally, the individual context, referring to the professional role and working mode is discussed in chapter 8. In addition, the theoretical framework drawn based on rich data of this research could be applied to other settings. Hence, transferability was ensured and the contextualisation of the research was taken into account.

Dependability of qualitative research refers to the stability of the research data and findings over a period of time and under different research conditions (Conelley, 2016). In other words, it refers to whether repeating the research in the same context and with the same participants, a similar narrative would be provided. The core of this research is that diversity perceptions are context specific; however, contexts such as country, industry, organisation or individual work role are not static. That is, these layers of context are dynamic and changing. Legal,

social, political, or any other major events can alter the diversity dynamics significantly and generating static narratives is, thus, not the aim of this research. Nonetheless, dependability of the interview process is ensured by reporting on the research steps and decisions being provided in detail, thereby enabling future researchers to repeat the research, yet not necessarily obtaining identical results (Shenton, 2004). Thus, dependability of the research is secured, whilst simultaneously, a contextual approach to exploring diversity perceptions is adopted.

Confirmability relates to the researcher's objectivity concerns along with the degree to which findings represent the ideas and experiences of participants and not the researcher's views (Shenton, 2004). Qualitative researchers, thus, acknowledge their own experience and subjectivity and how these shape data analysis (Petty, Thomson, and Stew, 2012). Throughout the research process, the researcher ensured her objectivity as far as possible. This was undertaken by constant reflection and awareness about her own potential biases and ensuring these did not interfere with the research process. For example, leading questions were avoided throughout all the interviews. Additionally, the researcher's understanding of the countries of research, which can be a source of bias, was mediated by the choice of an industry the researcher had no prior working experience in. Hence, confirmability was preserved throughout the research process. Overall, the guidance offered by Lincoln and Guba's (1986) trustworthiness criteria, in addition to researcher reflexivity and close documentation of the decisions taken throughout the research phases ensured that it was conducted rigorously. The next section provides the research design with regards to data collection and analysis.

5.3 Research Context: International Technology Organisations

As aforementioned, this research is conducted adopting a relational approach to explore the influence of context at several layers of analysis. As such, this section contextualises the research in terms of: national culture, industry, and organizations.

5.3.1 The Egyptian Cultural Context

A key aspect regulating both work and social life in Egypt is the Islamic religion (El-Kot and Leat, 2008) and this religious orientation influences the diversity dynamics. The Egyptian Christian minority is strongly discriminated against and marginalised (Galal, 2012; Yefet, 2017). This dynamic is intensified by the visibility of religion; most Christians have a cross tattooed on their wrists, whilst Christian and Muslim names are easily distinguishable in the Arabic language (Atta-Alla, 2012). Egypt has also exhibited increasing inequality in the past 40 years due to the rising proportion of the youth population and accompanying rising unemployment along with a deteriorating quality of education (ElGindi, 2017). Ethnic minority exclusion and marginalisation are a further neglected diversity issue in Egypt (Kumaraswamy, 2003; Nelson Moro, 2004; Henry, 2012). Since Egypt has a strongly traditional culture (WVS Database, 2013) and group memberships form the basis for social interactions (Hofstede, 2019), deviation from social traditions and norms is highly sanctioned (Uz, 2015), with the circumstances for Christians and ethnic minorities being quite unpleasant. Similarly, issues relating to sexual orientations are hotly debated, with LGBT identity or support thereof, being legally criminalised (Ahmady, 2018). Notably, questions related to sexuality and LGBT are omitted from the WVS' questions in Egypt. Egyptian social gender roles ascribe women the predominant role of wives, mothers and household caretakers (Galal, Said, Joekes, and Sami, 2017). Women have fewer legal rights than men in terms of marriage, child custody and divorce (Kucinskas, 2010). The social gender discourse is shaped by Islamic teaching, social traditions and colonial influences on women's rights. In fact, the political tension between the government and fundamentalists has impeded gender reform efforts (Megahed and Lack, 2011). In the last decade, Egypt has undergone socio-political changes fuelled by social injustice and lack of economic opportunities (Ersado and Gignoux, 2017). Overall, the above description depicts challenging dynamics for equality as well as a conservative attitude towards diversity (Traavik and Adavikolanu, 2016). Religion, authority and economic safety shape the social dynamics and values to a great extent. Diversity and its management research conducted in Western cultures would thus appear not to generalise to traditionally homogenous countries

(Mehng, Sung and Leslie, 2019), such as Egypt. Diversity management is however often anchored in human resources management, whose practices in Egypt are suggested to be influenced by Egyptian organisations' exposure to international influences and are to an extent, internationalised (Leat and El-Kot, 2007).

5.3.2 The German Cultural Context

The German diversity discourse has recently gained increased attention driven by governmental encouragement to manage diversity (Vassilopoulou, 2017). This was triggered by the European Union mandating the enactment of equality policies, despite the race equality policy having been opposed by churches and employers' associations (Vassilopoulou, Merx and Bruchhagen, 2019). Discrimination based on ethnicity is excluded from diversity management frames, whilst religion and sexual orientation have been contended as being the least relevant diversity aspects (Köppel, Yan and Lüdicke, 2007). The disregarding of race and ethnicity as well as cultural background stem from the German citizenship model, which is conceptualised on the notion of an ethnically homogeneous society, except for immigrants who are perceived as an 'exception to the rule' (Stringfellow, 2018). Cultural integration is thus ethnocentric and the need to manage ethnic diversity is undermined in organisations (Tatli *et al.*, 2012). Germany experienced a large wave of immigration and yet, the label *Gastarbeiter* – guest workers –, implies the perception that immigrant workers are welcome only for a brief period of time (Constant, Nottmeyer, and Zimmermann, 2012). Additionally, ethnic and cultural diversity dynamics have been influenced by Germany's history and its role in the two world wars and the Holocaust. Current diversity management discourse excludes racial diversity (Tatli *et al.*, 2012) and tensions surround the German cultural identity (van Hoorn and Maseland, 2010; Seiffge-Krenke and Haid, 2012).

Similar to the UK, and contrary to Egypt, Germany is considered masculine, individualist and is characterised as having low power distance (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010). On the dimensions of the WVS, Germany scores high on self-expression and secular-rational values (WVS Database, 2013). These values imply openness to and acceptance of diversity (Traavik and Adavikolanu, 2016). The labour market, however, shows a low degree of diversity in terms of gender, cultural background and age (Süβ and Kleiner, 2008). Additionally, gender is a dominant focus of diversity management, whilst race issues are excluded from the diversity discourse (Tatli *et al.*, 2012). Primarily due to an aging population and shortage in qualified employable individuals,

the professional integration of refugees based on their qualifications is part of the current discourse (Geis and Nintcheu, 2016). The overall philosophy of cultural integration in Germany indicates European, rather than German and liberal (rather than religious-cultural) values (Mouritsen, 2012), and social values are generally focused on work, assertiveness and gender roles are socially and emotionally differentiated (Hofstede, 2011). In sum, the German context contrasts with the Egyptian socio-cultural system, where religious values play a key role in daily life, socially and professionally.

5.3.3 The United Kingdom Cultural Context

The UK history has experienced larger waves of immigration compared to other European countries and despite implying cultural acceptance, racism related problems persist (Manning and Georgiadis, 2011). The WVS ranks the UK high on Self-Expression and Secular-Rational Values, thus indicating openness to topics, such as tolerance of foreigners, equality of sexual orientation and of gender, with there being less emphasis on family, religion and traditional values (WVS5, 2008). These values suggest a positive environment for diversity and attitudes towards it (Traavik and Adavikolanu, 2016). Multiculturalism refers to both the presence and the equitable participation of culturally diverse groups (Berry, 2016). Ethnic minorities are, however, economically disadvantaged in the UK (Georgiadis and Manning, 2011). The diversity management discourse is framed by multiculturalism and voluntarism, whilst class inequality, quotas and positive discrimination are socially taboo (Tatli *et al.*, 2012).

The UK employment market still shows racial and gender bias (EHRC, 2010). Pay gaps, unequal access to employment and occupational segregation are still challenges faced by religious and ethnic minorities (Klarsfeld, Ng and Tatli, 2012). These dynamics continue to exist despite anti-discrimination policies adopted by successive UK governments. The UK has enacted policies relating to gender, race, and disability. Moreover, as per the guidelines of the European Union, sexual orientation, age, belief and religion have also been added (Klarsfeld and Tatli, 2013). The UK's recent referendum regarding its exit from the European Union (Brexit), has social, political and cultural implications. The consequences of these dynamics for diversity and social integration have not yet been played out. However, recent research shows that both contextual economic factors as well as individual attitudes of ethnocentrism and xenophobia underlie individuals' votes to leave the EU (Carreras, Irepoglu Carreras and Bowler, 2019). At this point in time, the culture is undergoing a transformation, with the

outcome yet to show, which only strengthens the need for contextual diversity research. In conclusion, the diversity discourse is shaped by debates of multiculturalism and shows a high degree of diversity, yet with persisting inequalities.

5.3.4 Technology Industry

This section discusses the industry context of this research, which is discussed more in-depth in chapter seven of this thesis. The aim of this section is to contextualise the research by providing details on the industry and thus discusses key diversity challenges in technology. Women, ethnic minorities, individuals with disabilities and individuals from underrepresented backgrounds still lack appropriate mechanisms for inclusion into mainstream groups in the technology industry (Leung, 2018). Studying diversity and inclusion in tech is of necessity, for prior research has shown that discrimination related to gender, ethnicity, age, mental health, and neuro-divergence are prevalent topics in the industry (BIMA, 2019). The technology sector is still white, male, middle class, and able bodied dominated (CaSE, 2014). The industry, thus, presents a set of entry and progression barriers for women, ethnic minorities and other socially and historically disadvantaged groups. Some examples of the obstacles are: elite university recruitment by employers, lack of female role models, masculinity of engineering works, a dearth of part-time jobs and flexible working hours, male dominated networks, inaccessible workplaces as well as superficial solely gender focused diversity initiatives (Wright *et al.*, 2014). The sector's masculinity and whiteness is reflected as well in STEM education, which is dominated mainly by white males worldwide (Best, Sanwald, Ihsen, and Ittel, 2013; Burke, 2007; Charleston, Adserias, Lang, and Jackson, 2014; Glover and Guerrier, 2010; Stoet and Geary, 2018).

In addition to gender and race, class inequality is a persisting challenge in the information technology industry (Kvasny, Trauth and Morgan, 2009). This is reflected in this research, where many of the interviewees shared insights on a pattern of favouring graduates from 'elite universities'. The low representation of women has been documented widely. The German technology industry, for example, has only 13% females in technology related roles, whilst for the UK this figure is 17% (The Tech Partnership, 2016). Despite the European Parliament's efforts to enhance the attractiveness of STEM studies to young individuals (and specifically to women), across EU countries, women account for only 32.3% of high-technology employees (European Commission, 2019). Similarly, the Egyptian technology industry shows only 17.2% female employees (Bruni, 2017). A major factor causing women to leave the technology sector

is the lack of part time jobs and flexible working arrangements; particularly in the engineering and science labour markets (Hart and Roberts, 2011). Studying diversity in the technology industry is thus essential, not only because of the industry's male domination and underrepresentation of minorities, but also because of the industry's size and its contribution to the economy (Kirton, Robertson, and Avdelidou-Fischer, 2016). The need for more inclusive workplaces in the industry as opposed to merely hiring more women is stressed; organisational cultures need to change to be more adaptive to diversity (Griffiths and Moore, 2010). In contrast, accurate data on the ethnic composition of the industry is unavailable (Kirton *et al*., 2016). Finally, as discussed in chapter three, the construction of professional identities is influenced by the technology industry as a context. Wherein specifically, gender and ethnicity are diversity dimensions influencing technology related professional identities. The next section introduces the organisations included in this research.

5.3.5 Organisations included in this Research

In total employees from 18 different organisations were interviewed. Table 3 lists the organisations included in this research and presents their origins, their overall number of employees and the number of countries the organisations operate in globally. The information included in the table below was extracted from various company reports and websites. The size and global presence of the organisations are listed below to scope the meso organisational level of analysis. For matters of confidentiality and anonymity, the names of the organisations have been omitted and pseudonyms have been given as indicated below. In chapter seven, which addresses the meso level of analysis, the diversity definition and emphasis stated by the organisations are listed.

Table 3: List of Organisations included in the Research

	Company Pseudonym	*Origin*	*Employee Numbers*	*Global Presence*
1	TelCo	European	92,000	24 countries
2	CallMe	European	151,000	27 countries
3	MobilCom	Middle Eastern	40,000	15 countries
4	MobilMe	Middle Eastern	48,000	1 country
5	HomeTech	European	216,000	50 countries
6	TechOrg	Asian	188,000	170 countries
7	TechMind	European	95,000	113 countries
8	BlueTech	European	101,000	116 countries
9	TechKnow	American	20,000	12 countries
10	TechLov	Canadian	120,000	31 countries
11	DeepTech	European	8,500	11 countries
12	SpeedTech	European	13,000	20 countries
13	HipIT	American	43,000	32 countries
14	GTech	American	350,000	175 countries
15	EduTech	American	150,000	200 countries
16	DoIT	American	99,000	50 countries
17	TechChamp	Asian	40,000	39 countries
18	TranTech	European	5,000	26 countries

*Source: Various company websites and reports (2018-2019)

5.4 Research Design

In this section, the research design adopted to study diversity perceptions in technology is presented. The data collection methods (in-depth semi-structured interviews), the phases of data collection (two pilot studies and one main study), details of the interviews (themes and questions) and the sampling of the participants and their profiles are included.

5.4.1 Data Collection Strategy: An Overview

To explore the influence of context on diversity perceptions, qualitative interviews were conducted with employees of global organisations in the technology industry. In total, 68 interviews were conducted across two pilot studies and one main study. Research participants included individuals of different genders, religions, ethnicities, age, and tenure (see subsection 5.3.3 for more details). Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to gather in-depth insights of individual experiences (Evans, 2017) of diversity in their working context. Pilot study 1 (details in subsection 5.3.5) served to ensure the feasibility of a qualitative approach and researcher access to employees in the technology industry in Egypt, Germany and the UK. The participants of this study acted as gatekeepers for the researcher, whereby they connected her to potential candidates for the subsequent interviewing during the main data collection phase. Pilot study 2, on the other hand, was conducted to test the interview questions and format in each country. Finally, the third and main study, was conducted to explore diversity perceptions in the Egyptian, German and UK technology industries. Each study is discussed below in terms of: participants, purpose, interview details and questions. Adaptations undertaken by the researcher after each pilot study are explained. Table 4 summarises the data collection strategy.

Table 4: Data Collection Strategy

Phases Research	*Participants*	*Method*	*Dates*	*Purpose*
Phase 1: Pilot Study 1	14	Face-to-Face semi-structured in-depth interviews	December 2016 to February 2017	Identification of diversity related research issues; ensuring access to interview participants
Phase 2: Pilot Study2	5	Face-to-Face and online, semi-structured in-depth interviews	March 2018	Testing interview questions across the three countries
Phase 3: Egypt	21	Face-to-Face semi-structured in-depth interviews	April and May 2018	Main data collection in the Egyptian technology industry
Phase 3: Study UK	15	Face-to-Face semi-structured in-depth interviews	June to August 2018	Main data collection in the German technology industry
Phase 3: Study Germany	13	Face-to-Face and online semi-structured in-depth interviews	July to October 2018	Main data collection in the UK technology industry

5.4.2 In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi- or unstructured interviews are widely used in qualitative research and differ from structured ones. The focus lies in the perspective of the interviewees, who often take the discussion in a different direction, thereby highlighting what is important to them (Walliman, 2011). The researcher needs to focus on: asking open ended questions, actively listening, probing when needed and guiding the interviewee through the process of the interview (Patton, 2015). Social constructionist interviewing is an act of social meaning-making; "*in order for researchers to understand the meaning-making activities that take place during an interview, they must focus on the actions of individuals that influence the immediate social process and context of the interview, as well as those actions that have been influenced by other socio-political contexts or discourses*" (Koro-Ljungberg, 2008, p. 430). With the essence of this research being about the contextual nature of diversity, social constructionist, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Semi-structured interviews ensure the researcher can maintain the flexibility and open mind to allow concepts and theories to emerge from the data (Bryman, 2012). They give space for participants' sense making of the phenomena and

minimise the researcher's bias, which potentially occurs from imposing her/his preunderstandings about the researched topic (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton, 2013).

A list of themes and respective questions was prepared prior to the interviews. Addressing practical interviewing issues, Patton (2015) states four interviewing approaches: informal conversational interview, interview guide approach, standardised open-ended interview, and closed, fixed-response interview. To maintain balance between covering all interview topics and giving the participants the freedom to share what was significant to them, an interview guide approach was selected. The list of themes and questions only served as a guide for the interviews. The benefits of the guide were that it ensured a systemic, comprehensive approach to interviewing and that the limited time of the interview is well used (Patton, 2015). The topics covered in pilot study 1 and the interview guide used for the main studies are discussed in the respective subsections on each study.

5.4.3 Participant Selection: Purposeful Sampling

Potential barriers in terms of participant recruitment can be uncovered by conducting pilot studies (Kim, 2010). Pilot study 1 served, in part, the purpose of ensuring the researcher had sufficient access to employees of technology organisations in Egypt, Germany and the UK. The researcher's networking efforts were successful, for after interviewing 14 participants in pilot study 1, the main study included a total of 54 participants across the three countries. Purposeful sampling was adopted in the sense that *"the researcher purposefully selects individuals, groups, and settings for this phase that maximize understanding of the underlying phenomenon."* (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007, p.287). Whilst, quantitative research seeks generalisability through random sampling, qualitative research pursues revealing in-depth understanding by purposive sampling (Braun and Clarke, 2013). The researcher, thus, sought the support of pilot study 1 interviewees as well as her personal network to select participants for the main study. That is, a snowballing process for recruitment was deemed appropriate by the researcher. The dearth of diversity research in Egypt, however, resulted in a higher interest among Egyptian participants. There is no definitive validation approach in qualitative research (Flick, 2018), yet the number of participants should be small enough to allow deep case analysis and large enough to allow for data saturation (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007). In this regard, a number of interviewees as low as 10 participants and up to 30 participants per country or industry is sufficient to establich coherency in a qualitative study (Mason, 2010; Boddy, 2016). With this in mind, and in order to avoid quantifying the qualitative nature of this research, the

above stated interview numbers were considered sufficient by the researcher. To recruit participants, the researcher provided a research information sheet highlighting details of the study, the interview process and their role as interviewees (the participant information sheet is attached in appendix 1).

Diversity of the Research Participants

The aim of interpretivist/constructivist research is to develop novel, in-depth understandings of social worlds for which diversity amongst research subjects is essential. For, the variety of subjects' experiences leads to in-depth understanding of their context (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). The diversity of research participants was, therefore, a key pillar of this research. All the participants were employees of technology organisations operating in Egypt, Germany and/or the United Kingdom. Interviewees were holding positions at varying managerial functions and levels as well as in different technical work roles. The limited number of female (compared to male) participants reflects the gender imbalance and respective challenges women face in the industry. Pilot study 1 in particular, included more men than women interviewees. This pilot study was the primary means of gaining access to the participants of the main study. Thus, for subsequent data collection, a balance of males and females was actively sought and successfully achieved. On the one hand, this ensured that experiences of females in the male dominated technology industry were appropriately recorded. On the other hand, the higher number of males in the industry is – in itself – a factor significantly shaping this research. In addition to gender, the researcher ensured recruiting participants of different ages, religions, ethnicities, tenure, educational, functional, and cultural backgrounds.

Interview Details

The interviews lasted, on average, 1 to 1.5 hours and were conducted at different locations based on the interviewee's preference. Often, interviewees invited the researcher to visit them at their workplace, or otherwise suggested another location convenient for them. The majority were conducted face to face; however, a number of interviews with participants in Germany took place through Skype. To ensure consistency, the same interview protocol was followed in all the interviews. The researcher started the interviews by introducing herself and the research project, the interview process and the participants were informed of their rights as stated in the information sheet verbally. They were also told that they could ask questions at any point of time during the interview. Interviews were conducted in the English language. Since all

participating interviewees are employed in global organisations, English is the working language and hence, no translation from Arabic or German into English was necessary. All interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the interviewees (see section 5.5 on confidentiality and ethics). The topics and questions addressed each study are described in the respective subsections of this chapter. The next sections discuss each data collection phase: pilot study 1, pilot study 2, and main study (study 3) in depth.

5.4.4 Phase 1: Pilot Study 1

In social sciences research, pilot studies can take several forms, with one being referred to as a feasibility study, in which the main study is run on a small scale in pre-preparation (Polit, Beck, and Hungler, 2001). Additionally, pilot studies can be considered a pre-testing of a certain research instrument (Baker, 1994). In preparation for the main data collection process, a qualitative pilot study was conducted in the technology industry in Egypt, Germany and the United Kingdom. The study was conducted between December 2016 and February 2017. In total, 14 interviewees took part in this study, whilst that number might be considered high for a pilot study, it was pivotal for fulfilling the research aims and objectives. The study showed the appropriateness of a qualitative research approach in the technology industry. A main concern was the risk of having a homogeneous interviewee base. The low number of women and ethnic minorities in the industry meant the researcher had consciously to recruit minorities in the industry to ensure having a diverse group of participants. In addition, the study allowed the researcher to test and adapt her interviewing skills. Pilot study 1 was, therefore, crucial to understanding the diversity dynamics of the industry. The interviews covered various topics in relation to diversity: understanding of diversity; working in different cultures, countries and/or companies; leadership and diversity; communication with individuals from other cultures, perceived team diversity and diversity policies in the workplace.

Data from pilot study 1 revealed several important diversity dynamics to the researcher. Gender equality related dynamics dominated the discussion, whereby focus was on two aspects. Firstly, a stereotype of women being too soft/ delicate for demanding engineering tasks was widely held. Secondly, the participants discussed gender as a diversity management priority for organisations. In fact, the focus of organisational diversity management efforts was reported as being limited to gender balance. The aim of increasing the percentage of women was usually communicated to human resources managers and line managers involved in hiring processes. Other diversity dimensions (gender, race, age, education, tenure, and functional background)

were seldomly mentioned by the participants. Finally, the interview data revealed that participants often connected diversity dimensions. For example, gender and age, and nationality and gender were discussed in relation to one another. They highlighted the unique challenges of being a young women or an Arab woman in technology. Hence, the importance of considering intersectionality when researching diversity was reinforced and thus, was considered in-depth in the main study. The demographic information and country interviewees worked in are listed in table 5 below. The table shows that interviews were conducted in the three countries, as well as with one interviewee based in India, who virtually works with a team in Egypt and was recommended by an Egyptian colleague.

Table 5: Profiles of Research Participants of Pilot Study 1

No.	*Pseudonym*	*Gender*	*Age Group*	*Education/ Professional Role*	*Tenure in yrs.*	*Country*
1	Karim	Male	25-34	Engineering/ Engineer	8	UK
2	Thomas	Male	25-34	Engineering/ Engineer	9	UK
3	Nadim	Male	25-34	Management/ Technical Sales Manager	8	UK
4	Hatem	Male	35-44	Engineering/ Engineer	10+	Egypt
5	Youssef	Male	25-34	Engineering/ Engineer	10	Egypt
6	Noha	Female	35-44	Management/ Operations Manager	10+	Egypt
7	Tina	Female	55-64	Management/ Country Director	30	Egypt
8	Mourad	Male	45-54	Engineering/ Manager	15+	Germany
9	Ezz	Male	35-44	Engineering/ Manager	15	Egypt
10	Ramy	Male	35-44	Management/ Director	10+	Egypt
11	Seif	Male	35-44	Engineering/ Engineer	20	Egypt
12	Farah	Female	25-34	Management/ Manager	9+	India
13	Dunia	Female	35-44	Management/ Director	15+	Egypt
14	Jamil	Male	35-44	Engineering/ Director	18	Egypt

One main benefit of piloting qualitative research is that the researcher can reflect upon her/his own role and competence for conducting the research in a culturally sensitive manner (Kim, 2010). As the researcher herself has lived, studied and worked in all three countries of research

and speaks all three languages fluently, she was well aware of culturally sensitive topics and hence, which ones to avoid as well as how to address issues that, whilst still being sensitive, could be addressed. The role and potential influence of the researcher regarding data collection and interpretation is addressed in the researcher reflexivity section of this thesis. An additional benefit of pilot studies is to identify aspects that might jeopardise the success of the research project (Sampson, 2004). In particular, the pilot study ensures that the selected methods and studied issues are appropriate for the research from a practical perspective (Jairath, Hogerney, and Parsons, 2000). The researcher did not face any major challenges in conducting this pilot study and all the participants showed comfort with in-depth interviews. Participants showed an interest in diversity as a research topic and were supportive of the researcher's efforts in contacting and recruiting participants for her main study. The insights gained from pilot study 1 indicated that diversity research is highly relevant to the technology industry and welcomed by the interviewees. It was concluded that the in-depth semi-structured data collection method was appropriate and thus, it was adopted for the main study.

5.4.5 Phase 2: Pilot Study 2

Whilst the first pilot study was a general exploration of diversity in the technology industry at an early research stage, the second was conducted to test the questions and themes used for the main data analysis. Thus, prior to the main studies in Egypt, Germany and the UK, the interview guide was piloted with at least one interviewee in each country. Piloting the interview questions was key to ensuring that questions and themes or topics discussed during the interviews are well understood by the participants. That is, in contrast to pilot study 1, pilot study 2 was aimed at testing the interview questions since the qualitative methodology and interview techniques had been addressed in depth during the former. Pilot study 2 revealed the need for clarification with regards to two terms: inclusion and social groups. Inclusion was often used by participants interchangeably with diversity. The term was, to the majority of interviewees, either unknown or associated with diversity, because of organisational communication on the two concepts. A majority of the interviewees lacked a proper understanding of the terms. Social groups were mistaken as indicating groups formed based on social activities and personal interests, such as sports or arts. Thus, for the main study, the researcher adapted her questions to ensure that all used terminology was coherent. Overall, no major changes were necessary based on pilot study 2 beyond minor clarification of these two terms. Having made these small adjustments, the researcher continued with the third phase, as detailed in the next subsection.

5.4.6 Phase 3: Main Studies in Egypt, Germany and the United Kingdom

Phase three included the main data collection to explore diversity perceptions across the technology industry in the three researched countries. Data collection in Egypt was conducted during the months from March 2018 to June 2018. The researcher started preparing for the study from January 2018 by reaching out to potential participants and arranging to meet for face to face interviews upon her arrival in Egypt. At that point in time, individuals who had agreed to participate in the research had already started connecting the researcher with other potential interviewees, in Egypt, Germany and the UK. The collection of data in the UK was conducted face to face from June 2018 to August 2018, whilst participants in Germany were interviewed online via video conferencing during the period of July to October 2018. During the interviews, diversity perceptions were explored with regards to the following aspects: understanding of the construct of diversity, the degree to which individuals perceive themselves similar to/different from others in terms of their social and professional identities, diversity management policies individuals knew of in their organisations and the nature of the technology industry in terms of diversity.

All interviews were commenced by asking the participants to narrate their educational backgrounds and their career paths, which helped the researcher in understanding their professional identities. This was followed by exploration of the meaning of diversity to individuals and the diversity they perceived in their working context. Diversity management perceptions were explored by asking participants about initiatives implemented in their organisations, how these were communicated and how the diversity programme was managed. To probe self-categorisation processes, interviewee perceptions of their teams' similarities and differences to themselves were explored. Participants with line management roles were asked whether and how they considered diversity in their hiring decisions and in their team management. Participants were further asked about the nature of diversity in the industry, what groups they considered majorities and how the power dynamics are shaped in the tech industry. The discussion of these diversity dynamics supports the analysis of whether diversity management practices match diversity as perceived and experienced by individuals. Table 6 below lists the themes and sub-themes discussed with the interviewees. The complete interview guide is attached in appendix three of this thesis.

Table 6: Themes for Semi-structured Interviews

Theme	*Sub Themes*	*Focus of Discussion*
Diversity	Personal (conscious) diversity understanding	Personal definition of diversity; subjective nature of diversity; understanding of inclusion.
	Experiences of inclusion and exclusion	Belongingness to the organisation and team; experiences of inequality and discrimination.
	Diversity management	Leadership involvement and communication; diversity initiatives in the workplace; priorities of diversity management set by the organisation.
Identity	Role identity	Role models; career aspirations; socialisation in the workplace; future career plans; perceptions of own job attractiveness.
	Teams and colleagues	Atmosphere; communication; conflict; perceived similarity and dissimilarity between self and others; success factor; role in team; loyalty to team.
	Social identities	Social groups in the organisation; barriers and bonds between social groups; majority and minority groups; marginalised groups/ individuals.
Context	Industry culture	Description of the industry; reasons for working in the industry; plans to leave or stay in the industry
	Organisational culture	Organisational values, differences between employers, most liked and disliked aspect about working there; origin/nationality of organisation.
	Cross cultural working experience	Working with teams across cultures (virtual teams); travel for business; relocation.

Table 7 presents the key demographics and background information of the participants interviewed for the main data collection in Egypt, Germany and the UK. Further in-depth discussion of each contextual layer is included in the respective empirical chapters. The coverage of each contextual layer in depth serves to locate the research appropriately and reveals the influence of context on diversity perceptions.

Table 7: Participant Profiles for the Main Study in Egypt, Germany and the UK

No.	*Pseudonym*	*Gender*	*Age Group*	*Education/ Professional Role*	*Tenure in yrs.*	*Country*
1	Zahra	Female	25-34	Linguistics/ CSR	8	Egypt
2	Tamer	Male	25-34	Engineering/ Engineer	9	Egypt
3	Taymour	Male	25-34	Engineering/ Engineer	9	Egypt
4	Sabine	Female	25-34	Management/ HR Manager	8	Egypt
5	Emad	Male	25-34	Engineering/ Engineer	10	Egypt
6	Shehab	Male	25-34	Engineering/ Engineer	10	Egypt
7	Fawzy	Male	25-34	Engineering/ Engineer	9	Egypt
8	Shahine	Male	35-44	Engineering/ Engineer	18	Egypt
9	Shady	Male	35-44	Management/ Marketing	15	Egypt
10	Farid	Male	25-34	Engineering/ Engineer	10	Egypt
11	Zain	Female	35-44	Management/ HR	12	Egypt
12	Lydia	Female		Engineering/ Sales	8	Egypt
13	Doaa	Female	20-24	Management/ Customer Service	4	Egypt
14	Loai	Male	35-44	Civil Engineer/ Procurement	15	Egypt
15	Nihal	Female	25-34	Management/ Trainer	8	Egypt
16	Rana	Female	25-34	Management/ HR	10	Egypt
17	Bahaa	Male	35-44	Engineering/ Marketing	16	Egypt
18	Noah	Male	25-34	Engineering/ Engineer	8	Egypt
19	Yasmine	Female	25-34	Management/ Marketing	8	Egypt
20	Fady	Male	25-34	Engineering/ Engineer	10	Egypt
21	Mohab	Male	35-44	Engineering/ Engineer	15	Egypt
22	Ziad	Male	25-34	Engineering/ Engineer	9	Egypt
23	Gamal	Male	35-44	Agriculture/ Manager	10	Egypt
24	Somaia	Female	25-34	Management/ Client Management	6	Egypt
25	Samar	Female	25-34	Management/ Client Management	8	Egypt
26	May	Female	25-34	Management/ Client Management	8	Egypt
27	Sam	Male	35-44	Engineering/ Sales	18	UK
28	Jacob	Male	25-34	Engineering/ Sales	8	UK
29	Susan	Female	25-34	Management/ Sales	9	UK
30	Diego	Male	35-44	Engineering/ Sales	12	UK

31	Sama	Female	25-34	Management/ Sales	8	UK
32	Ronald	Male	45-54	Engineering/ Sales	25	UK
33	David	Male	25-34	Cognitive Psychology/ Design	6	UK
34	Sally	Female	25-34	Design/ Design	7	UK
35	Alia	Female	25-34	Computer Sciences/ Design	8	UK
36	Sam	Male	35-44	Management/ Sales	20	UK
37	Mike	Male	25-34	IT/ Data Analytics	7	UK
38	Nadiya	Female	25-34	Mathematics/ Coder	8	UK
39	Thuraya	Female	25-34	Engineer/ Software Development	5	UK
40	Faris	Male	20-24	Engineer/ Software Development	3	UK
41	Ramez	Male	25-34	Engineer/ Software Development	3+	UK
42	Hannah	Female	35-44	Engineering/ Design and Development	8	Germany
43	Mona	Female	25-34	Management/ Business Development Role	10	Germany
44	Kamal	Male	35-44	Engineering/ Leadership Role	15	Germany
45	Achim	Male	35-44	Operations/ Management	8	Germany
46	Anna	Female	35-44	Training/ Management	8	Germany
47	Paul	Male	35-44	Operations/ Management	10	Germany
48	Stephanie	Female	35-44	Strategy/ Management	10+	Germany
49	Peter	Male	35-44	Corporate Communication	20+	Germany
50	Tobias	Male	25-34	Engineer/ Mechanical Engineering	5	Germany
51	Dana	Non-Binary	25-34	Engineer/ Software Development	5+	Germany
52	Zeina	Female	35-44	Operations/ Management	8+	Germany
53	Michael	Male	35-44	Managerial	10+	Germany
54	Selim	Male	35-44	Engineer/ Software Development	10+	Germany

5.5 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis provides researchers with a theoretically flexible and accessible approach to the analysis of qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Despite its wide application in qualitative research, thematic analysis has not been properly branded (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules, 2017; Walliman, 2011). Identification of themes is an integral activity of most qualitative data analysis approaches, such as grounded theory, narrative analysis, discourse analysis and content analysis (Bryman, 2012). Thematic analysis is often part of a process included in other qualitative analysis methods, however, it is also acknowledged as a standalone analytical approach (Braun and Clarke, 2012; Nowell *et al.*, 2017; Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, and Snelgrove, 2016). It is essentially about "*systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set.*" (Braun and Clarke, 2012, p. 57). The approach supports the researcher in understanding the data set and making sense of shared experiences and meanings (Braun and Clarke, 2012). Thematic analysis was adopted for the current study to explore the contextuality of diversity by investigating diversity perceptions in the layers of context they occur within. An inductive approach to knowledge creation has been followed, according to Braun and Clarke (e.g. Braun and Clarke, 2006; Braun and Clarke, 2012; Braun and Clarke, 2013). The inductive nature of this research means that the codes and respective themes were derived primarily from the empirical data, whilst existing theory served as a framework for discussing the empirical findings. The layers of context of analysis (national culture, industry and organization, and individual identity) were pre-selected based on the review of literature and the resulting relational approach. Braun and Clarke's (2013) thematic analysis approach was carried out with the following six steps:

1) Familiarisation with data;
2) Generation of initial codes;
3) Searching for themes across the codes;
4) Reviewing the themes;
5) Defining and naming the themes;
6) Producing the report.

The above steps were followed by the researcher, thus ensuring a clear structured process was undertaken. ***Data familiarisation*** was implemented through both its transcription and in-depth reading. During this phase, attribute coding of the data was undertaken, which refers to the socio-demographic coding of data (Kuckartz, 2014). Information, including country,

gender, age, organisation and profession was coded. This allowed collating data and exploring particular perspectives (e.g. explore data by gender, by country, or by profession) at later research stages.

The second and third steps, ***generation of the initial codes*** and ***searching for themes*** across the codes were conducted using the qualitative data analysis computer software NVivo 12. Thematic analysis of the data was conducted using NVivo 12 Software. The software enabled the researcher to employ a systematic approach to the data analysis (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). The documents were imported into the system and NVivo 12's functions of creating nodes and sub-nodes were used to generate initial codes. The use of NVivo was limited to data management and it allowed the researcher to maintain tracking of the demographic references of the interviewees. Additionally, it helped the researcher to consider the data based on gender, profession, and country separately. For example, to explore the influence of national culture on diversity attitudes, the researcher separately analysed and coded the data by country. To analyse the identity level of context, data was analysed based on gender as well as technological and non-technological professions. To conduct these two steps, values coding of the data was undertaken, which refers to the application of codes reflecting the interviewees' beliefs, attitudes and values about themselves, others, an issue or an idea (Saldaña, 2015).

The ***reviewing of themes*** was conducted over several steps. Existing codes were organised into themes. Afterwards, the researcher revised the themes, by reading the data excerpts constituting them and rearranging codes into the themes they were most suitable for. At this stage, sub-themes were created by grouping codes where appropriate.

The final two steps, ***defining and naming themes*** and ***producing the report*** were then undertaken by the researcher simultaneously, with the themes being defined and named and discussed in relation to the existing theory in the respective chapters. Overall, the selection of a thematic analysis approach to analyse data was deemed appropriate for fulfilling the objectives of this research. The various elements of each layer of context were explored thematically and the themes and subthemes emerging from data analysis are discussed in the respective empirical chapters.

5.6 Confidentiality and Ethics

Throughout the entire research project, standards of ethical research were considered by the researcher. According to Creswell and Poth (2017), three ethical principles should be considered by qualitative researchers: justice (referring to inclusivity and equitable treatment), welfare (which means minimising harm), and respect (referring to individual rights to confidentiality, anonymity and consent). The researcher ensured that participants were aware of their rights and their role as potential interviewees. All potential participants (and subsequently all actual interviewees) were provided with a participant information sheet (appendix 1). This included details on the following aspects: purpose and aim of the research, the interview process (location, recording, etc.) and questions, handling of the audio records of the interviews, right to withdraw from study, right to not answer any question and anonymity of the interviewees.

Anonymity of research participants was preserved throughout all the research phases: preparation for data collection, data collection, data analysis and writing up. Despite full anonymity not being sought by all the research participants, the researcher decided to ensure this for all, such that neither their own names nor the name of the organisation would be revealed. Additionally, the researcher made sure that no part of the thesis would make the participants or their employers identifiable by a third person. Aspects, such as individual identity in the workplace, their relationships to others (including peers and supervisors), exclusion, inequality or discrimination can be sensitive and thus, require the researcher to enable participants to share their insights without any perceived or actual risk of being identified. Consequently, the researcher specified that neither their name nor the name of their organisations would be mentioned on record. During the interviews, the researcher referred to participants' workplaces as 'the organisation' or 'your employer'. Informed consent forms (appendix 2) were signed by both the researcher and interviewee to confirm their rights as study participants, their receipt of the information sheet and their consent to the audio recording of the interviews. Any kind of data gathered throughout the research process, such as research notes, interview notes or recordings remained with the researcher, as is normal practice in qualitative research. Finally, prior to conducting any data collection, the researcher obtain the ethics approval required by the University of Westminster. Since the research included travelling for the purpose of data collection, travel insurance and a risk assessment were appropriately addressed prior to travelling.

5.7 Researcher Reflexivity

> *"Do you feel more Egyptian or more German?" (A question asked by almost everyone I ever met, I never found an answer I am happy with)*

Reflexivity in qualitative research addresses the researcher's role, referring to her/his level of consciousness and active involvement in the process of research (Palaganas, Sanchez, Molintas, and Caricativo, 2017), being thus a process of strengthening self-awareness (Lambert, Jomeen, and McSherry, 2010). In short, it is about whether the researcher shares her/his participants' experiences and is part of the researched world (Berger, 2015). In other words, reflexivity implies that both the participants as well as the researcher create 'interpretations' which are considered the research data (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). Thus, reflexivity is about my presence with the participants as a young, mixed ethnicity, Egyptian-German, Muslim, non-conservative, woman. I thus considered the issue of reflexivity, in terms of the possible effect of my person on the research journey, in general and on the interpretation of the data, in particular. To apply reflexivity to my research, I focus on two elements: my person and my research journey. I first reflect on how being binational and living in all three research countries has shaped my research. I discuss certain research decisions, such as the choice of industry and research methods. And finally, I reflect on how my own identity has shaped this research.

At the core of this thesis lie diversity perceptions and the experiences with diversity. The research is about what a person feels, thinks about and reacts to (consciously and unconsciously) when confronted with who they are and whether or not, they feel fully 'seen' and accepted. The research has involved dealing with the subtle and dynamic nature of diversity and with the effect of this on a person's daily life at work. Having lived, studied and worked in Egypt, Germany, and the UK, this gave me the advantage of knowing the cultures in depth and the languages, especially the connotations of word usage. Moreover, it has made me aware of the subtle dynamics relating to diversity, having been an Egyptian (Muslim) woman in Germany and a German (liberal) woman in Egypt. This kind of involvement, whilst it enriches the research and gives it a unique kind of depth, also creates potential for bias. Working in international development, specifically, in a German-Egyptian cooperative endeavour, stimulated my motivation to study diversity from an identity perspective, one that would take into account the industry (field) and national culture. As a person belonging to both cultures, I regularly felt pressured into acting as a bridge between the cultures. The frustration

of fully understanding each 'side' and yet, not being able to convey the meaning to both, eventually made me understand why diversity, culture, stereotypes, prejudice, and all else packaged with the phenomenon matters every single day.

Speaking all three languages of the countries where I conducted this research enabled me to understand the contexts in depth. From a practical perspective, it facilitated literature searches for each country in its native language. Conducting literature searches in each language, in itself was indicative of the maturity of equality, diversity and inclusion research in each country. The abundance of English language literature is a reflection of the origins of both diversity research and practices in the United States. There was much less German literature to be found than in English. Interestingly, German diversity literature often used the English terms diversity and inclusion, instead of the German terms. Thereby also reflecting the ethnocentrism overshadowing diversity research and practices. Literature search in the Arabic language was the most challenging. For the terms diversity and inclusion as concepts in management research are, as I illustrate below, almost non-existent, as is literature on them. What I found were either studies in Arabic on biological diversity, or historical studies. The second advantage I gained through language, was that I could understand what the research terminology I adopt means in each country. The Arabic language offers two terminologies for the term diversity: '*Tanawu"*', which most closely translates to 'variety' and '*ikhtilaf*' which means difference. In an Egyptian context, the word 'Tanawu'' is almost never used to describe individuals and hence, not commonly used to describe diversity. Whilst difference or '*ikhtilaf*' is a negatively connoted term, for example, telling someone they are different can be understood to mean they are 'weird' or not understood and hence, not fully accepted. In German, diversity translates to '*Vielfalt*' or '*Vielfältigkeit*'. Socially, the term is more positively connoted than in Arabic, saying that something is '*Vielfältig*' is positively perceived and carries the notion that it is interesting and inspiring. A similar language-related issue comes from how foreigners are termed across languages. In Egypt, foreigners are termed '*Ajanib*'[plural] and we usually use this word in reference to expats, who are white Western individuals. The word '*Ajnaby*'[singular, male], or '*Ajnabya*' [singular, female], would almost never be used to refer to an African, Asian or any non-white foreigner, or even other Arab/Middle Eastern foreigners. That is, the term '*Ajanib*' is preserved for white foreigners, who are perceived as being innately better people. In Germany, the opposite dynamic is observed. The term for foreigner of '*Ausländer*', is socially used more for non-Western and non-European individuals and is negatively connotated. Being aware of these subliminal meanings or connotations of language

is a reflection of a deeper understanding of the culture. The motivation to study diversity in the technology industry was partly, that I had not worked in the industry and did not hold presumptions or in-depth knowledge as to how diversity dynamics are shaped in the industry. It thus was a way to manage my own potential bias and ensure I remained neutral. Had I decided to pursue diversity research in international development right after working in the field, this would have made the process of reflexivity more challenging. International development, as a field of work, triggered many political and socio-cultural thought processes in me. The field being one where monetary aid is given by one government to another, for the purposes of development and project implementation, came with its burden. The imbalance of power created by economic strength reflected in the decision making processes and on the power distribution in our daily work, which troubled me. The spirit of 'cooperation' soon evaporated for me. Situating my research was, thus, a process I felt I needed undertake early during the PhD journey. Technology, as an industry, felt appropriate as it crosses cultural and geographic boundaries. Additionally, it was an unfamiliar industry to me. So, I knew I would have the ability to understand my participants with very few prior assumptions about what diversity could mean to them. Often, my identity feels (to me and to others) like a bundle of contradictions. This ultimately relates to others' expectations with regards to my behaviour, my beliefs, my values and my choices in life. These experiences were extremely contextual. In Germany for example, when I say my name, a very explicitly Muslim and Arab name, I face assumptions about being suppressed. In Egypt, I regularly faced the opposite. Once I state that my German mother is, in fact, a single mother in Egypt and that my father passed away when I was a baby, it becomes a given that I must be misinformed about all matters to do with religion, culture and Egyptian traditions; anything that constitutes 'appropriateness' in life. These 'experiences of cultures' led to two major decisions in my life. The first was to relocate to a country I do not consider home, which was the reason I chose to undertake my doctoral research in the UK. Secondly, my cultural background and my constant search for an answer to 'who I am', sparked my interest to study diversity from an identity lens. These aspects ultimately shaped some of my research decisions and to mitigate my own potential bias, I took several decisions. The first was in relation to the choice of the technology industry, as explained above. Secondly, I ensured my in-depth understanding of the country contexts by drawing on the existing diversity literature of the focal countries and not relying solely on my own experience of these cultures. Since I had no prior experience as a diversity practitioner, any potential bias at the organisational level was minimal.

5.8 Chapter Summary: Methodology

The ontological philosophy of subjectivism and a social constructionist epistemology have guided the research process, which aimed at capturing the complex, contextual and dynamic nature of diversity. Context in this sense refers to the direct environment of individuals (their social and role identities), the organisational context and the overall industry and country context. An inductive approach to knowledge creation through interpretations of individuals in this specific research context was pursued, without resorting to applying predetermined theory.

In this chapter, the methodological underpinnings of the research, both from a theoretical/ philosophical stance as well as the practical methods decisions taken have been explained and justified. The social constructionist epistemology and inductive approach to knowledge creation were discussed. This was followed by a detailed explanation of the research design. Pilot study 1 was undertaken to ensure the viability of the studied concepts in the technology industry. The feasibility of carrying out the research on that industry was confirmed and the appropriateness of employing qualitative methods was established. Pilot study 1 provided the researcher with the opportunity to test her interview skills and to ensure the suitability of in-depth interviews as a data collection method. Finally, the study was essential for recruiting participants for the pilot and main studies. Regarding the scope of the main data collection for this research, 54 technology industry employees were interviewed across Egypt, Germany and the United Kingdom. Ethical considerations are an imperative aspect of any research project and were appropriately addressed, as reported in this chapter, with the relevant documents being provided in the appendices. Finally, the role of the researcher in the process of this type of research was addressed in depth in the reflexivity section.

Part Three: Empirical Investigation

Chapter 6: Macro Context Analysis

Influence of National Culture on Diversity Attitudes

Introduction

Diversity perceptions and attitudes are individual constructs, embedded within the person's context. The macro layer of context is the country and its culture. This chapter focuses on how the national culture shapes individual diversity perceptions and attitudes. It thus addresses the first research objective, which is aimed at exploring the role of national culture in forming diversity perceptions. The chapter is divided into three sections. To contextualise the national culture, the theoretical lenses of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, cultural tightness-looseness theory and the World Values Survey are integrated in the first section. The second section presents the research findings per country, whilst the final section covers the contextual experience of gender diversity. It highlights the different meanings associated with gender in each country, thus demonstrating the need for contextualised diversity research, particularly when exploring the most researched diversity dimensions. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key findings.

6.1 Macro Context Analysis: Influence of National Culture on Diversity Perceptions

> "*Very good question. I guess it is the country culture. It would always be stronger. I mean you cannot beat the culture of someone who has been raised in a certain country for all his life and then you change that in a day. So well yeah, companies can have cultures of course, but then it will always be kind of depending on where they are operating." (Samir, Male, Engineer, UK)*

The above interviewee statement shows the perceived strength of national culture regarding diversity perceptions. Several interviewees expressed similar opinions, stating that, if a company of European origin operates in Egypt or one of American origin operates in the UK or Germany, national culture plays a more significant role in shaping diversity perceptions than organisational culture. This chapter explores how culture influences individual diversity attitudes and perceptions. Whilst diversity is a reality in all societies, attitudes towards it in different national contexts is under researched (Traavik and Adavikolanu, 2016). Prevailing values in a society influence and justify the attitudes, beliefs and actions of groups and individuals (Dobewall and Rudnev, 2014). Social values are internalised at an early age and

act as guidelines for life (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). Adopting a context-specific relational approach includes exploration of the structural and social conditions that shape inequality experiences, such as: beliefs, religion, social stratification, legislation, education, work and family dynamics (Syed and Özbilgin, 2009). Egypt, a Middle Eastern culture, is compared with Germany and the UK as Western/ European cultures, with the aim of challenging the ethno-centrism of mainstream diversity research and dominance of that undertaken in the US (Joshi and Roh, 2009; Jonsen, Maznevski and Schneider, 2011). The depth of a relational approach highlights the cultural construction of diversity meaning (Sawyer and Thoroughgood, 2012). In addition to considering historical and contemporary diversity issues in each country, three approaches are integrated to contextualise the research: Hofstede's cultural dimensions, cultural tightness-looseness theory and the dimensions of the World Values Survey. The significance and rationale of integrating these approaches were highlighted in the literature review section of this thesis.

The values attributed to each country by the cultural theories are used to categorise and compare the national contexts, in accordance with previous studies (e.g. Lunnan and Traavik, 2009; Traavik and Adavikolanu, 2016). The integration of several theories or indices to contextualise national culture context is necessary, because the relationship between the different layers of culture is unclear (Taras, Rowney and Steel, 2009). Hofstede's theory and cultural tightness-looseness are complementary and measure different aspects about culture. That is, the latter addresses how the strength of norms and sanctions for deviation from norms influence individual behaviour, whilst the former compares cultures with respect to aspects such as inequality, gender roles and uncertainty (Gelfand, Nishii and Raver, 2006). Hofstede describes cultural values, whilst cultural tightness-looseness refers to the strength of these. For, tightness-looseness can amplify or attenuate the influence of cultural values (Stoermer, Bader and Froese, 2016). Cultural tightness-looseness, therefore, explains variations in cultural norms; tight cultures allow less variation than loose ones (Taras, Kirkman and Steel, 2010). Finally, the World Values Survey (WVS) maps the world in a world values map, addressing socio-political, religious, and economic values (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005; Dobewall and Rudnev, 2014), being conducted every 5 years. The inclusion of insights from the WVS, thus, captures changes over time and allows for the consideration of religion. Table 8 below presents the values for each theory for Egypt Germany and the UK, being followed by a brief explanation of each approach's implication for diversity.

Table 8: Summary of National Culture Scores in Egypt, Germany and the UK

Cultural Theories	Egypt	Germany	UK
Individualism	25	67	89
Masculinity	45	66	66
Power Distance	70	35	35
Looseness-Tightness	3.9 (very tight)	82.9 (loose)	89.3 (very loose)
World Values Survey	Traditional/ Survival Oriented	Self-Expression Secular-Rational	Self-Expression Secular-Rational

*Values obtained from Websites of Hofstede and the WVS

Tightness-Looseness (TL) has two components, the strength of social values and norms, meaning how clear and prevalent they are and the degree to which deviation from these norms is socially tolerated (Gelfand, Nishii and Raver, 2006). In tight cultures, individuals strictly adhere to social norms and any deviance is noticed and sanctioned. In loose cultures; however, many deviant behaviours are accepted and might even be encouraged (Stoermer, Bader and Froese, 2016). On an individual level, the tightness or looseness of a culture moderates the relationship between attitudes and behaviours and national culture values (Taras, Kirkman and Steel, 2010). Since cultures vary in their TL, the dimension is conceptualised as a continuum as opposed to a dichotomy (Lee and Kramer, 2016). The countries included in this research offer an interesting comparison, Egypt is considered a very tight culture, whereas the UK is very loose, and Germany is considered slightly looser than the UK (Uz, 2015). Expressing opinions that deviate from social norms in tight cultures leads to social exclusion, which is the case, for example, with homosexuality (Stoermer, Bader and Froese, 2016). It is, thus, suggested that, at an individual level, diversity attitudes in Egypt will be less welcoming of diversity compared to Germany and the UK. Based on their European values, the UK and Germany are suggested to have more commonalities to each other than to the Egyptian context.

The ***World Values Survey*** (WVS) maps country values and their changes based on two bipolar dimensions: traditional vs. secular-rational, and survival vs. self-expression (WVS Database, 2019). The dimensions span to form a *Cultural Map,* which includes all regions and countries in the world (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). Traditional countries value national pride, religion as well as respect for and obedience to authority, whilst secular countries value rationality and autonomy (Inglehart and Welzel, 2010). Survival oriented cultures refer to societies emphasising physical and economic security, whilst self-expression ones value quality of life,

self-expression and well-being (Inglehart and Baker, 2000; Traavik and Adavikolanu, 2016). Countries high on self-expression are characterised as highly valuing personal responsibility and tolerating diversity, while societies on the survival end emphasise the opposite values (Dobewall and Rudnev, 2014). Traditional and secular-rational countries are differentiated according to the extent to which religion regulates life. That is, traditional countries emphasise religion, as opposed to secular-rational countries, valuing a system interlinking God, the country and the family (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005; Dobewall and Rudnev, 2014). According to the WVS data from 2014, Egypt is highly traditional survival oriented, while Germany and the UK are both self-expression and secular-rationally oriented, with the former scoring higher values than the latter (WVS Database, 2008).

Hofstede's model encompasses six dimensions to compare cultures. The discussion below includes those four dimensions that relate most to diversity issues addressed by participants of this research. ***Power Distance*** directly addresses inequality and the extent to which unequal distribution of power is socially accepted (Hofstede, 2011). High power distance cultures tend to have paternalistic and autocratic leadership (Speracin, 2010). Egypt is considered a high power distance country, while both Germany and the UK have an equally low score on this dimension (Hofstede *et al.,* 2010). It is, thus, expected that inequality is more acceptable and justifiable in Egypt, whilst a higher degree of equality exists in Germany and the UK, with the discussion surrounding equality more advanced.

The ***Individualism*** **vs.** ***Collectivism*** dimension is concerned with the degree of closeness in social relationships and whether societies attach more value to individual differences, rather than group similarities and bonds (Hofstede, 2011). Many African countries are characterised by a high degree of collectivism and strong in-group cohesion based on religion, family ties and ethnicities (Hennekam and Tahssain-Gay, 2015). Individualist cultures, however, are a social framework, which emphasises that individuals should focus on themselves and direct family members, rather than wider societal in-groups (Taras, Kirkman and Steel, 2010). Egypt is considered a strictly collectivist culture, which means that in-/ and out-groups, as well as religion shape the social dynamics. In contrast, the UK and Germany are both individualistic cultures, wherein the emphasis lies more on the individual than on groups. It is suggested that in-group formation based on religion, ethnicity and social status are a prevalent issues in Egypt, whilst in Germany and the UK, individual achievements, such as education and career experience are more valued.

The ***masculinity/femininity*** dimension addresses the nature of values in society. Masculine values are, for example, assertiveness and materialism, whilst feminine ones are focused on close social relationships, care for the weak and cooperation (Taras, Kirkman and Steel, 2010). Germany and the UK are both considered more masculine than Egypt. Being considered an out-group member in Egypt creates social tension, whilst in the German and UK contexts, success, competition and achievement are of social value (Hofstede *et al.,* 2010). It is thus expected that disturbing group harmony or standing out can cause tension in the Egyptian context, whereas it might be less the case in both Germany and the UK.

Uncertainty Avoidance relates to the degree a society tolerates ambiguity and describes the extent to which members of society can cope with unstructured, novel and unknown situations (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005; Hofstede, 2011). Tolerating ambiguity contributes to creating a positive climate for diversity, particularly in terms of gender and ethnicity (Hofhuis, Van Der Zee and Otten, 2012). Societies with high uncertainty avoidance usually establish more rules, and are less accepting of deviant ideas or behaviours (Kirkman, Lowe and Gibson, 2017). Egypt scores very high on uncertainty avoidance, whilst Germany has a relatively high score and the UK has a low one (Hofstede *et al.,* 2010). The three countries thus offer both the extreme ends of the continuum (Egypt and the UK) and the in-between (Germany). It is anticipated that the Egyptian context offers a more challenging environment for diversity than the UK and that in the German context acceptance of differences can be situational or conditional. It should be noted that TL is not the same as Hofstede's dimensions. His dimensions of individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance and power distance are inherently different. The World Values Survey, on the other hand, allows the consideration of certain values in detail as the questions asked in the survey address cultural values in-depth. For example, gender is explored by asking about issues relating to women's perception as managers, their role in political realms, domestic violence, and equal pay (WVS Database, 2013). The value of nationalism and a detailed exploration of the role of religion in public life are possible by integrating WVS data. Table 9 offers a summary of demographic information and diversity categories protected by the law as well as indices relating to diversity and equality.

Table 9: Country Demographics and Diversity Laws

Figure	Egypt	Germany	UK
Population	97 MM	83 MM	66 MM
Ethnic Minorities	Bedouin, Nubian, Amazigh	Turkish, Arab	African-Caribbean, South-Asian
Religion	Muslim majority; Coptic Christian minority	Christian majority; minority groups: Jewish, Muslim	Christian majority; minority groups: Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Jewish, Buddhist.
Languages	Arabic/ English	German	English
Diversity Categories Protected by Law	religion, belief, sex, origin, race, colour, language, disability, social class, political or geographical affiliation	sex, colour, social or ethnic origin, genetic features, religion or belief, language, political (or other) opinion, national minority membership, disability, age, sexual orientation, birth and property	age, gender reassignment, being married or in a civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity leave, disability, race (inclusive of nationality, colour, national or ethnic origins), belief or religion, sex and sexual orientation
Gender Inequality	115	5	14
Global Inequality	114	2	14

*Information obtained from various sources: governmental websites and UNDP reports

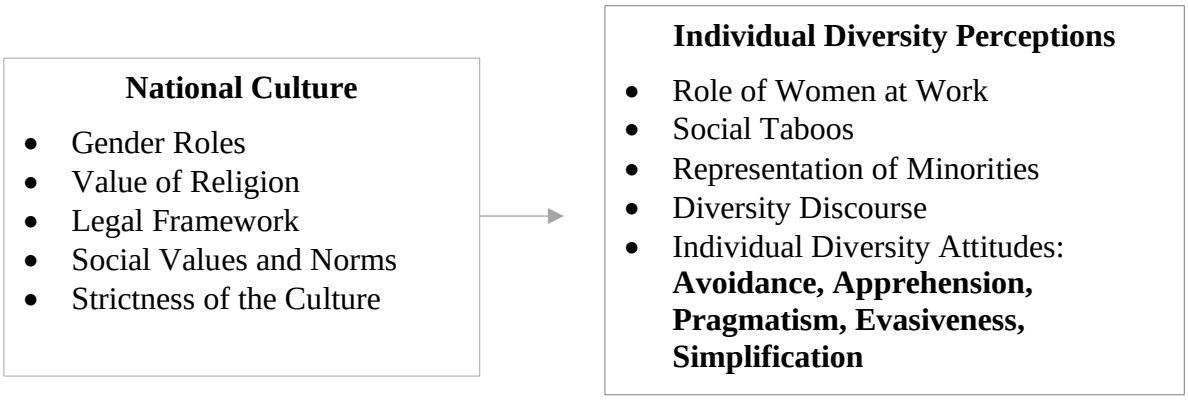
To summarise, the three national contexts addressed here are unique in terms of national culture values, according to all the integrated approaches. The Egyptian context offers the most challenging atmosphere or climate for diversity. At an individual level in that country, it is thus proposed that diversity attitudes are shaped by 'fear' of the unfamiliar and an unwelcoming behaviour towards diversity. The German context is situated close to the UK on cultural dimensions, and emphasises individual achievements, which can indicate that forms of diversity, even if considered unfamiliar to the German culture, might be tolerated, as long as individual contribution and achievements are accomplished. The UK context is the most open or welcoming out of the three different contexts. It is to be expected that forms of diversity unwelcome in the Egyptian and/or German contexts, might be well accepted in the UK. Finally, despite Germany and the UK both having an immigration history which welcomed it for labour purposes, and their, until now common, legislative influence by the EU, the two countries

exhibit different contemporary diversity environments. Particularly with the wave of Syrian refugees in Germany and the Brexit in the UK in hindsight, current diversity discourses are different in the two countries.

6.2 Research Findings: National Culture Influence on Diversity Attitudes

The influence of national culture on individual diversity attitudes is noticeable in terms of the way individuals communicate about certain diversity topics, or their intentional or unintentional exclusion of topics. Diversity attitudes are explored in terms of how individuals set their diversity priorities, and what they consider relevant and important in their contexts. This section lays out the research findings for each of Egypt, Germany and the UK, respectively. Figure 2 below conceptualises the analysis of the research findings.

Figure 2: Influence of National Culture on Diversity Issues



Source: Maatwk, 2020

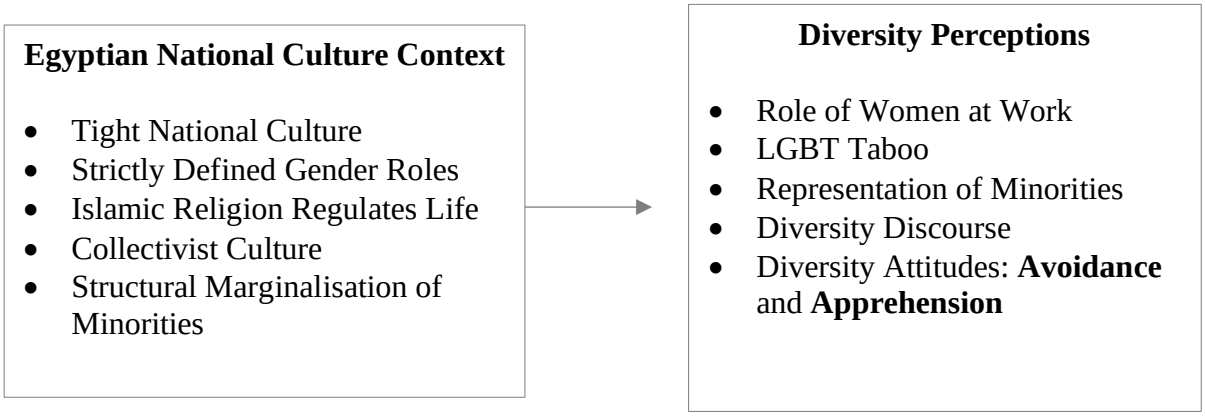
The figure shows that cultural constructions of gender, religion, the country's legal framework, social traditions and the degree of flexibility of these influence individual diversity perceptions. These diversity perceptions are anchored in the individual perceptions of the role of women at work, which topics are considered social taboos, integration of social minority groups, individual attitudes towards diversity and the diversity rhetoric they adopt.

6.2.1 Egyptians' Diversity Attitudes: Avoidance and Apprehension

> *"It is not written somewhere, but it is not acceptable to talk politics or talk religion." (Zain, Male, Engineer, Egypt)*

The exclusion of socially sensitive topics from the diversity discourse in the workplace was a dynamic referred to by the majority of interviewees in Egypt. A denial of structures of inequality was observed; participants repeatedly adopted a nationalistic rhetoric, narrating that *'Egyptian-ness'* (i.e. everyone is Egyptian) means individuals are treated and perceived equally. The diversity topics addressed by most participants were: **gender, ethnicity/race, age, education, sexual orientation, physical disabilities and religion.** Regarding these dimensions, the findings discussed below indicate widespread equivocal attitudes towards diversity issues. Figure 3 below summarises the findings. Data analysis showed that the context of the Egyptian culture leads to the attitudes of **avoidance** and **apprehension** by individuals.

Figure 3: Influence of Egyptian Cultural Context on Diversity Issues



Source: Maatwk, 2020

'Invisibilisation' of Structural Inequality

> *"I personally don't understand, because it is not against the culture, it is against the religion and two things we don't do, we don't play politics and we don't talk religion." (Zain, Male, Engineer, Egypt)*

Participants often referred to racial or ethnic diversity as non-applicable to Egypt and LGBT issues to be inappropriate from a religious perspective. However, prior research addressing the stigma surrounding these concerns confirms that social dynamics and inequality structures continue to marginalise certain groups. The strongest avoidance attitude regarding a topic concerned sexual orientation. LGBT was briefly mentioned by all the Egyptian participants, because it is a diversity topic focused on by the international branches of their organisation, which has caused social and legislative tension in Egypt. In all the interviews, sexuality diversity was considered inappropriate to discuss or to include on the social or organisational diversity agenda. The roots of this attitude are a reflection of cultural values on a wider scale. The traditional orientation of Egypt, according to the WVS, means that religion plays a pivotal role in shaping behaviours and values (Dobewall and Rudnev, 2014). That is, the Islamic religion regulates socio-cultural life in Egypt (Leat and El-Kot, 2007), including personal relationships and partnerships, which adds to the hostility towards LGBT rights. Besides the religious stigma, the social dynamics and the legislative framework compound this negativity. Given Egypt's tight culture (Uz, 2015), social sanctioning of deviating behaviour is strong (Gelfand *et al.,* 2006); it goes against Egyptian values to acknowledge any non-heteronormative sexual identities. Deviance from these norms is not only socially, but also legally sanctioned. As aforementioned, any propaganda interpreted as promoting LGBT identities or communities is considered a criminal offence; the social narrative around homosexuality perpetuates that it is wrong, immoral, illegal and punishable (Ahmady, 2018). This being the legal and societal reality, the participants avoided talking about the issue, and would usually – with lowered voices – state that it is not a 'thing' in Egypt, or as shown in the statements below, that this contravenes the legal framework. Many interviewees expressed the view that LGBT is illegal and thus, cannot be addressed as a diversity concern in Egypt. This demonstrates the tightness of the cultural context, which does not even allow the explicit expression of what are considered deviant opinions (Stoermer *et al.*, 2016). The two comments below from a corporate social responsibility and an HR manager, both tasked with diversity

and inclusion responsibilities, illustrate how social and legislative stances are reflected in the focal organisations in Egypt.

> *"They are stressing very much on diversity they make sure that your every local branch is following, but here in Egypt we cannot follow everything. With regards to sexual interests, we have a specific law that contradicts with this. This section is the only one we're not complying to here, yet everything else we try to abide by." (Zahra, Female, CSR, Egypt)*

> *"One of the other things is LGBT and this is something that is quite a trouble here in Egypt." (Sabine, Female, HR, Egypt, Female)*

Hence, avoidance and exclusion – negative diversity attitudes – are adopted when dealing with taboo topics. Regarding LGBT, in particular, the avoidance of discussing it or acknowledging the topic as a diversity concern is rooted in legislative and religious sensitivity and the extreme tightness of the culture. Similarly, sensitive to the diversity of sexuality, is the marginalisation of religious minority groups. Despite extensive research and media coverage of religion related tension, religious diversity was met by most participants with denial and assertions that no '*issues or inequalities*' exist. Inequality and marginalisation of religious minorities in Egypt are made invisible by drawing a picture of '*all is fine, we are all Egyptians*'. The quotes below showcase the sensitivity of religion and how it should not be a concern '*in the workplace*' and that even diversity within the same religion can be an issue, if not approached cautiously. Whilst a Muslim engineer stated outright that: *"What I feel for diversity, I will not talk about diversity in religion, as it shouldn't be a concern" (Yasmine, Female, Engineer, Egypt).* The following statement by an HR manager shows more awareness about religious diversity; acknowledging the different religious orientations and practices in her organisation.

> *"Well at the end of the day, they were Egyptians but the religion that was quite diverse. We have Christians with Muslims, we have very strict Muslims, we had aware Muslims, but not doing that religion, so they were very different, maybe because we're all Egyptians, we would celebrate the main things together. […] Christians are only a very small portion of the population and sometimes they were not able to have all the days off for their holidays. […] It was an inclusive thing, especially the religion aspect, because this is quite an intense topic so we would not want to be discriminating against in it." (Sabine, Female, HR, Egypt)*

In contrast to the above statements, a Christian female participant reported that religion did influence her previous work experience at a small local firm, saying that *"Christians in a local company, it becomes quite obvious [visible] that they are Christians. So, sometimes you find someone you are talking to never looks at you, because from a religious piety, he doesn't need to look at you, it's a conservative thing"* (Lydia, Female, Engineer, Egypt). The reason why individuals modulate the inequalities religious minorities are subjected to, is rooted in Egypt's collectivist nature. It is common in African countries, that in-groups are formed on the basis of religion (Hennekam and Tahssain-Gay, 2015), and Egypt's collectivist nature means that group similarities are valued more than individual differences (Hofstede, 2011). Egypt's population consists of a majority of 90% Muslims (Leat and El-Kot, 2007), with the minority of Christians, thus, being socially considered an out-group. Despite the repeated narrative by interviewees that Christian minorities are treated fairly and equally, traces of inequality can be found in individual cases. For example, one interviewee stated that despite their top management being made up of Christians, they were keen on being neutral towards religion, yet he recounted an incident and narrated that: *"When I was hiring people, my manager asked me to skip some Christian applications and I was really mad, because I thought, the guy who is hiring us all is not doing this, how can we do this? It hurts the company and it is not fair"* (Loai, Male, Engineer, Egypt) These narratives reflect how religious diversity plays out at the workplace: Egyptian Copts present a case of structural inequality, despite identifying as Egyptians, they are under-represented in influential positions, including governmental institutions (Galal, 2012). In fact, research with Christians residing in a religiously tolerant area in Cairo, showed that the daily life of Coptic Christians is overshadowed by microaggressions, internalised fear, and anger and irritation at unjust treatment (Ha, 2016) This is also true of class, in that wealthy Copts are subjected to less discrimination (Delhaye, 2011). In conclusion, the sensitivity of religion at the workplace is partly acknowledged, yet the implications of religious inequality structures are downplayed. Religion is an essential aspect of the Egyptian culture and thus, diversity that goes against Islamic values and religious minority groups is met with attitudes of avoidance and tabooing. The explicit exclusion of certain diversity issues indicates that national culture marginalisation issues are reflected in the individual attitude and narrative.

Nationalistic Narrative: 'We are all Egyptians'

> *"Regarding race, we do not have much race diversity, such as other European or more diverse countries. We do not have much race inequality." (Taymour, Male, Engineer, Egypt)*

Ethnic diversity presents further complicated dynamics in the Egyptian context. The narrative of '*everyone being Egyptian*' and that, racial diversity and inequality are '*not an issue*' in Egypt shaped interviewee perceptions. Indeed, Afrobarometer Egypt data shows that 74% of Egyptians take pride in being Egyptian (Afrobarometer, 2016). This 'national pride' was mirrored in the research findings, where nationality was prioritised over ethnicity and religion, which results in sustaining inequalities faced by minority groups. The internal ethnic diversity in Egypt is thereby structurally neglected. The majority of participants stated similar opinions, besides claiming that there is 'no racial diversity', it was contended that everyone is 'Egyptian'. The nationalistic notion is, thus, used to counter-argue the structural discrimination of ethnic minorities. Class issues are also interwoven with ethnic minority inequality. Specifically, economic inequality leads to minority groups residing in mostly smaller rural areas and cities, which impacts on access to education and employment (ElGindi, 2017; Ersado and Gignoux, 2017). Since the organisations included in this research are multinational players, most employees were middle-upper class from Cairo and Alexandria. Several participants stated that their employers hired primarily elite university graduates (American, British, and German Universities in Cairo), two national universities (Cairo and Ain Shams University) and Alexandria University. Moreover, they reported that they rarely encountered individuals from outside Cairo or Alexandria. Participants also repeatedly stated that there is no diversity of 'nationalities', since the Egyptian labour market is closed and the employment of foreigners requires complex procedures.

> *"I don't think people understand what diversity is in the first place. Those who do understand what it is focus mostly on gender issues. They have never thought of diversity as a whole, because Egypt is quite homogeneous in terms of culture, so there are not really different ethnic groups." (Bahaa, Male, Engineer, Egypt)*

Precise data on ethnic minority groups in terms of numbers and representation is not available, however, Nubians (Kumaraswamy, 2003), Copts (Galal, 2012; Yefet, 2017), African refugees (Nelson Moro, 2004; Henry, 2012), and Sinai Bedouins (Atta-Alla, 2012), have been researched as minority groups and the inequality and marginalisation they face is well

documented. For example, Nubians are treated as non-equal members of society (Janmyr, 2017) and suffer from poor economic opportunities (ECHR, 2010). With the exception of Coptic Christians, none of the above groups were visibly represented in the workplace or were referred to as ethnic minorities by participants and consequently, could not be reached as participants for this research. Whilst this might explain why individuals perceive it as an irrelevant diversity aspect, the lack of ethnic diversity at work is, in itself, a clear indication of marginalisation and exclusion of minorities in the Egyptian national context. Hence, because structural ethnicity related inequality is profound at national country level, at the individual level, consequentially, the existence of such inequality is brushed aside. The cultural dynamics underlying this narrative are embedded in socio-political issues. Egypt scoring highly on power distance, means that inequality is generally accepted (Hofstede, 2011) and that members of the more powerful social groups create psychological distance between themselves and less powerful social group members (Brennan *et al.*, 2015). Generally believing that inequality of ethnic minorities does not exist and neglecting tensions surrounding ethnic minorities in Egypt, is a reflection of a deeper social dynamic, namely, the high tolerance of unequal power distribution. Despite claims that there were no issues with racism, discussions with the interviewees about their working relationships with Indian partners paint a different picture. Since all the interviewees worked in international organisations they were all regularly exposed to other cultures. Most international organisations cooperate with others in India and hence, most interviewees had regular interactions with Indian teams. The comments below show how Egyptians hold racist beliefs about Indians and even compare this to how they feel perceived by their European partners.

> *"I do not believe it was based on the race thing. It's based on competence, because the thing is we deal with a lot of Indians […] so if I am a racist person I would blame it on the race, if I'm not a racist person I would blame it on the competence, but since most of them are Indians, everyone blames the race." (Taymour, Male, Engineer, Egypt)*

> *"When we had the same encounter with Indians, I started to look with the eye of the Germans when they used to handover work to Egyptians and hence, I started to learn and understand about diversity. The Indian people really astonished me, they have done the work in a very organised way, they have even excelled at what they were doing, which I really liked, from that perception I have understood about diversity and how to deal with different cultures without complexes." (Youssef, Male, Engineer, Egypt)*

Consequently, whilst individuals can 'detach' themselves from the segregation of Egyptian minorities and relate it to the macro-context, traces of racism can still be observed through industry dynamics. In conclusion, diversity attitudes in the Egyptian context are shaped by avoidance and fear of sensitive topics, which often leads to inequality being made invisible and minority groups marginalised. National contexts significantly shape diversity attitudes (Syed and Özbilgin, 2009; Traavik and Adavikolanu, 2016) and in the case of Egypt, religious and legislative restrictions on sexuality, in general and LGBT in particular, are sensitive topics. The tightness of the social context, combined with the highly collectivist, power distant orientation, greatly influence individual attitudes. Moreover, perception of the Egyptian nationality as a higher order similarity conceals discrimination based on religion and ethnicity. Egyptians, however, consider religion a central value of daily life, in personal as well as professional spheres (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005) and accordingly, 93.8% of WVS respondents stated that religion was very important (WVS Database, 2013). Religious segregation and the sensitivity of discrimination against Egyptian Copts make religion a tense discussion in the workplace. Issues relating to sexual orientation diversity were only mentioned by a limited number of interviewees; mirroring the social perception of sexuality from a morality and performative standpoint (Hofstede, 2011). This comes in contradiction to the UK, in which both gender and sexual orientation are considered major diversity priorities. Ethnic homogeneity and extreme geographical and economic marginalisation of minorities lead to an attitude of denial towards ethnic and racial inequality.

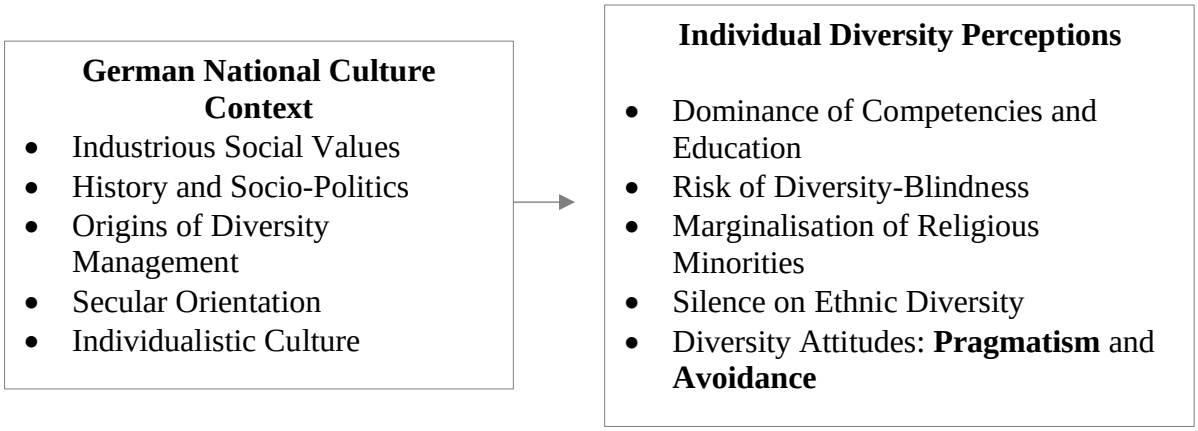
To summarise, individual diversity attitudes and perceptions mirror the strict norms and regulations at the national level. Legislative regulation and socio-cultural norms (mainly stemming from religious values), are key factors that shape individual attitudes. The individual attitudes can be described as avoidance and apprehension. In a nutshell, the Egyptian context reveals two themes that encapsulate attitudes towards diversity: the '*Invisibilisation*' of structural inequality and the adoption of a nationalistic narrative to undermine and marginalise minorities. Both themes indicate an attitude of avoidance and apprehensiveness towards sensitive diversity concerns/dimensions. The next section discusses the influence of the German cultural context on individual diversity attitudes.

6.2.2 German Diversity Attitudes: Pragmatism and Avoidance

> *"At that instance I just felt like white nepotism and I was very…there is nothing I could do about that." (Dana, Non-Binary, Software Developer, Germany)*

The diversity narrative in Germany was shaped by pragmatism or a sense of 'practicality' that revolved around diversity management practices. Aspects such as **gender pay gap**, **recruitment** and **selection bias**, **gender quotas** and **employment barriers** dominated the discussion. Education and competencies, were stated as being a basis for equality in the workplace. Statements by participants usually included references, such as *'we hire based on qualifications'* and that educational level (having a higher education degree) was an aspect of similarity among their colleagues. The context was often claimed to be culturally 'very' diverse; however, most non-German cultural diversity was White European and only very little pertained to non-white or non-European subjects. Interestingly, almost no participants mentioned the Turkish community in Germany, which is an integral part of German society. Hence, two themes are discussed to demonstrate the German diversity narrative: the pragmatic approach to diversity at the individual level; and the exclusion dynamics surrounding cultural and ethnic diversity. Figure 4 below summarises the analysis of the German cultural context and diversity perceptions.

Figure 4: Influence of German Cultural Context on Diversity Issues



Source: Maatwk, 2020

Dominant social values of industriousness, secularism, individualism, Germany's history, diversity management practices and the current socio-political situation were all significant factors shaping individual diversity perceptions. Diversity perceptions were anchored in the dominance of education, low representation of minorities and a risk of diversity-blindness. These dynamics have resulted in pragmatic and avoidant attitudes towards different aspects of diversity.

Pragmatic Approach to Diversity

> *"I feel that we talked a lot about diversity and that we need to talk less about it. For example, the women's quota or the alternative sex-oriented quota and so on, I think these things you can't tell the company: 'hey you need more homosexual people in your company'. I will get what I get, if I get the right employee, I will get him to work. If he has another sexual interest, I have to actually protect him. That this is his right and his private thing and that's it." (Selim, Male, Engineer, Germany)*

The first theme on the diversity narrative in Germany is pragmatism or a sense of practicality; the initial response to what diversity means to individuals was repetitively related to diversity management practices in their organisations. The key difference to both Egypt and UK, is that instead of mentioning prioritised dimensions (gender, religion, sexual orientation, etc.), the participants all agreed that only an individual's qualifications counted, particularly, their higher education degree. Other examples of practices mentioned by participants were: women's quota, gender pay gap and human resources activities of recruitment and selection. The above interview statement is an example of how competency and qualifications were prioritised over diversity, which is a rational and justified approach to hiring. However, it bears the risk of sustaining inequality by keeping the privilege with the privileged, thus resulting in diversity blindness rather than diversity neutrality (Herring and Henderson, 2011). In similar vein, the statement below by a manager, whose responsibilities included large scale recruitment and hiring, describes the diversity philosophy of the organisation, where '*diversity is not specifically targeted*'.

> *"We don't have any kind of specific or targeted quota of diversity, however, we have people from all over the world. […] But people graduated from university is the most common thing. […] in the end, the qualifications are the most important factor. Looking into the quota let's say in terms of gender, how many women and how many men are team leaders, this was not given much attention, not as much attention as to the fact of who is more qualified. A lot of men who got rejected, this was because a woman was better or did a better interview." (Achim, Male, Manager, Germany)*

The pragmatic attitude towards diversity or the perception of diversity through a practical 'politically correct' lens (such as hiring purely based on qualifications and thereby muting diversity), can be explained through national diversity management trends. Organisational motivation to manage diversity is to gain legitimacy as opposed to economic gains (Süβ and

Kleiner, 2007). From a socio-political perspective of integration, the conceptualisation of a virtuous citizen in Germany is rooted in '*law-abiding industriousness and education'* (Mouritsen, 2012, p. 92). These values, coupled with diversity management being introduced as a human resources approach to acquire talent and resolve skills shortages (Vassilopoulou, Merx and Bruchhagen, 2019), might explain why, at the individual level, a diversity blind hiring approach has a strong possibility of becoming a reality.

> "*Some places will say they're a diverse company, which just means that they're like seven white men and then three white women and the three white women, like, make it diverse so…I know there is like at least one other person who identifies as queer; I don't have like a queer community at work or anything…In the bathrooms we do have a sign that says…well this goes actually into gender diversity, but on the bathroom doors it says All-Gender-Bathroom." (Dana, Non-Binary, Software Developer, Germany)*

A further dynamic indicating the pragmatic approach to diversity management is its reduction to gender related issues. That is, both diversity and diversity management were reduced to addressing gender dynamics, to the exclusion of other diversity issues, such as ethnicity, sexual orientation and culture. The above statement by a non-binary and non-white participant is an example of the anchoring of diversity in gender, which is a trend that has been observed both in existing literature (e.g. Stringfellow, 2018; Tatli et al., 2012) and in the data collected for this research. The reductionist approach to diversity, comes at the expense of other critical issues such as race and religion and largely disregards intersectionality, since gender is mostly regarded from a 'white European' perspective. In short, the reduction of diversity to gender is summarised by an interviewee stating that diversity is about women's empowerment: *"So, there is a huge investment to that women empowerment. When it comes to the culture of diversity, that's the main topic"* (Mourad, Male, Engineer, Germany). Other diversity topics significant in Egypt (such as religion) and in the UK (such as sexual orientation), as well as ethnic diversity were less addressed. Congruently with Egypt, religion was stated to '*not belong in the workplace*' in Germany; the reasons behind this are however different. For instance, the following statement was made by a Muslim interviewee in Germany: *"My religious interest, or my daily spiritual interest, something like this has no place at work, because I did experience that it is not easy for other people to understand and accept this"* (Selim, Male, Engineer, Germany). Germany's secular nature means that religion is a private individual matter and does not play a significant role in public life (Ingelhart and Welzel, 2005). Religion was accordingly

considered unimportant by a majority of 61.7 % of the WVS respondents (WVS Wave 6, 2013). The individualistic nature of the country further contributes to religion being a matter of private practice, which is thus considered irrelevant for work by many. To conclude, the pragmatic view on diversity in the workplace observed at the individual level in Germany, is anchored in the national significance of education, industriousness and the rule of law. The focus on these aspects however, would appear to lead to the neglect of more complex inequality structures, in particular with regards to ethnic and racial minorities and cultural integration, in general.

Subtle, Silent Racial Discrimination

> *"In terms of racial diversity; that one is kind of interesting. So again, the guy that we just hired from India, he relocated from India and he is the only other brown person in the team. So, he is the only other brown person, me and him." (Dana, Non-Binary, Software Developer, Germany)*

The second dynamic that emerged from data analysis relates to issues of race and ethnicity. Predominantly, non-white employees discussed racism-related issues, while European participants referred to nationality, but excluded ethnic and racial diversity. The main nationalities referred to were European, including Spanish, Italian, Hungarian, Netherlands, Swedish and Dutch, but very rarely were Asian countries mentioned. Middle Eastern and Turkish nationalities were referred to mainly to note their low representation in the workplace, despite being large cultural minority groups in Germany. The interviewee below refers to cultural representation in his department, which consisted of over 400 employees, to signify the domination of white employees. He narrates that: "*Well I, have one Arabic colleague, only one, and one Indian colleague. And other non-Germans are usually Eastern European. The ethnicities you typically find in Germany are Arabic, Turkish, Lebanese but, we have almost none of them [represented at work]" (Tobias, Male, Engineer, Germany)*. However, participants were not able to offer possible explanations for the low level of ethnic diversity in the workplace. Potential underlying reasons for this lie in the German diversity management discourse, as well as the country's historical context. The country lags behind with regards to the management of ethnic diversity, which is not considered a priority by organisations (Köppel, Yan and Lüdicke, 2007). The introduction of diversity management to Germany has been almost exclusively as a matter of human resources management policy, and not usually as means of decreasing racism or inequality (Vassilopoulou, Merx and Bruchhagen, 2019). At the individual level, 30% of native-born Germans exhibit racist attitudes and believe that due

to the decline in employment opportunities, foreigners should return or be sent back to their home countries (Decker *et al.*, 2010). Additionally, a majority of Germans believe that matters of racism and inequality are already sufficiently addressed and that there is no need for more policies (Eurobarometer, 2009). Many of the Germans interviewed for this research, however, self-identified as 'global citizens', who were exposed to other cultures professionally or through extended periods of travel. Whilst there were no signs of anti-foreigner attitudes amongst them, the discussion of ethnic diversity in the workplace lacked depth.

> *"You just deal with the part where they are a bit maybe racists. So honestly speaking, no matter whether you are from a better background, or a knowledgeable background, they would see that another German is better than you because they are German." (Zeina, Female, Manager, Germany)*

Experiences of racism or discrimination of religious minorities were evident, however imperceptible or subtle. Similar to the above respondent, other ethnic minority interviewees also reported that they often experience racism intangibly. This was referred to with such terms as 'harmless jokes' or 'silent racism' and as described by the above interviewee 'maybe racist'. This does not come as a surprise, considering how current generations in Germany cope with the country's history with Nazism. Tatli et al. (2012), suggested that silencing and externalising racial inequalities is adopted as a coping mechanism, to deal with the national guilt. Young generations in Germany, despite being born several generations after the Holocaust, experience tension in forming their national and cultural identities (Seiffge-Krenke and Haid, 2012).

> *"Yeah racism. It still exists and you don't even feel it you can smell it I would say. If you go into a room and you have someone that has a problem with your colour or with your religion, you smell it, you feel it directly when you go in." (Selim, Male, Engineer, Germany)*

As per the above statement, the subtle experiences of racist attitudes are still an obstacle in the German context. Whilst participants all agreed that no overt or measurable racism or discrimination was experienced, the 'vibe' of racism was always present. For instance, one Arab expat in Germany, when asked whether he experienced unfair treatment, racism, or cultural stereotyping, refused to answer the question and stated that, "*no, it's nothing major or didn't impact let's say visibly… This is why I want to pass this question, because it will go into more of speculation, so nothing concrete*" (Kamal, Engineer, Male, Germany). The subtlety of racism reflects contemporary socio-political dynamics in Germany. Until recently, Germany

was officially ‘not a country of immigration’ and the political and media perception that Germans and Turks were culturally too dissimilar to integrate was widespread (Stringfellow, 2012). Whilst the sentence ‘not a country of immigration’ was omitted from the law in 2005, there remains a stigma around minority groups. The past debate of imposing a German *Leitkultur* that foreigners have had to conform to, underpins the diversity challenges Germany is facing today (Bellard and Rueling, 2001). Thus, it does not come a surprise, that the German model of integration (which presumes that foreigners must assimilate into the ‘*Leitkulur*’), has been considered a failure (Stringfellow, 2018).

Exceptions to racial discrimination or racism could be observed at companies that hire many foreigners due to the nature of their work. For instance, the interview statement below reflects a highly diverse workplace in terms of nationality. However, a culturally diverse workforce is necessitated by the organisation’s business in the Middle East and is not the result of organisational diversity management efforts.

> *“Well really, actually, we are lucky again to be in such a dynamic and diverse, of course, environment that it is not like just the Syrians are the outsiders that are coming to the organisation. Like we have so many foreigners they are not the only ones. So, it is not like they are standing out in any way. Or that they are like in the focus that when people, when they walk around like they look different, for example, for everybody else, like the majority, are actually foreigners.” (Anna, Female, Manager, Germany)*

In the context of this interviewee, the high representation of Middle Eastern cultures in the workplace creates an opposing dynamic, where Germans are the minority. In contrast, the following comment highlights the sensitivity of refugees employed in her organisation.

> *“In Germany we have a lot of refugees. So, it is pretty much like a sensitive topic to everybody. Because of many things, like first they sometimes cannot accept jokes being told about the refugees. The other thing is the reason they are here. Some people are here, because they have to work. Because there is no other option for them, they are sent to us by the ‘Ausländerbehörde’ [Authority for Foreigners]” (Zeina, Female, Manager, Germany)*

The social stigma further surrounding refugees or asylum seekers in Germany is rooted in preferences with regards to ‘who is welcome’. Previous research has shown that German

society is more welcoming towards refugees with severe vulnerability, high employability and those who are Christian rather than Muslim (Liebe *et al.*, 2018). The initial welcoming of 'deserving refugees' has, however, transformed, whereby patterns of suspicion and hostility towards refugees have been resurfacing in German migration discourse (Vollmer and Karakayali, 2018). Issues impeding the integration of Arab refugees at the workplace can, thus, be attributed to their wider social circumstances and acceptance in Germany. That is, the dynamics shaping interpersonal interactions at work and employment issues are influenced by the macro national context.

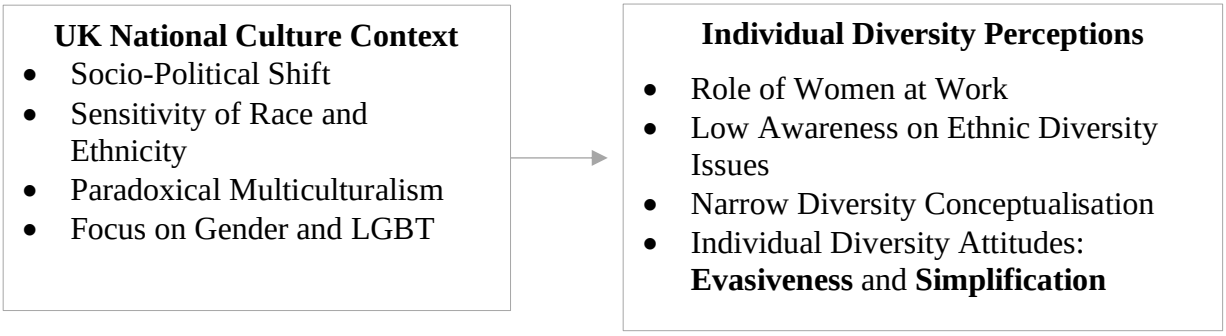
To summarise, the national context of Germany, based on perspectives such as those of Hofstede, cultural tightness-looseness theory and the world values survey, indicates a positive attitude towards diversity. However, taking into consideration the current socio-political issues, the country's history and the origins of diversity management, a different picture emerges. The resulting individual attitudes towards diversity are pragmatism and silencing or avoidance. Whilst the pragmatism in organisations stems from dominant social values, avoidance shapes attitudes towards ethnic and racial diversity, being rooted in the troubled historical and political trajectories in Germany.

6.2.3 The UK's Diversity Attitudes: Evasiveness and Simplification

> *"It's really hard to have those conversations, but yes, it is about privilege. It is about class. It's a chasm between people who have grown up in a very comfortable environment and take things for granted and are successful in their own right, but they depend on so many different things that they have access to. And so, it's that versus someone who's in a very low-income household, in a part of society that is overlooked, that doesn't have that structure, that help and infrastructure to rely on to be able to be as successful." (Alia, Software Designer, Female, UK)*

Amongst the three research countries, the case of the UK can be considered the most open to diversity. The discussion on equality, diversity and inclusion is more advanced, both in scholarly terms and amongst the research interviewees. The most mentioned diversity dimensions were: ***gender, LGBT, race, age,*** and ***education***. Women in Tech and LGBT were the two top concerns according to the participants, who repeatedly stated that their organisations considered them the top diversity priorities. Race, ethnicity, as well as class were side-lined by the participants. That is, despite being key diversity concerns in the UK context, they were usually only mentioned briefly. Data analysis yielded two key themes: evasiveness regarding ethnic diversity and a focus on gender and LGBT. Figure 5 below summarises data analysis for the UK context.

Figure 5: Influence of the UK Cultural Context on Diversity Issues



Source: Maatwk, 2020

Low Ethnic Diversity: Evasiveness

> *"They are all guys, all fairly multicultural, but mostly American white guys." (David, Male, Software Designer, UK)*

> *"Even if the company is international, and people come from everywhere, there is still a big percentage of white males." (Mike, Male, Data Scientist, UK)*

The low representation of ethnic minorities in technology in the UK was referred to by the majority of interviewees. Despite stating that their workplaces were 'fairly multicultural', participants usually also reported that the majority of employees still consisted of white men. Diversity as an abstract construct not relating it to any specific dimension was considered '*good for creativity and problem solving*'. Some participants also commented how constantly working with the 'same mind-set, same people' can get 'boring', particularly in the technology industry, but heterogeneity can negatively impact on innovation. Despite this initial positive outlook on diversity, when addressing ethnic diversity, this depicted a different picture. The majority of participants concluded that their workplaces were very 'white', thus indicating critically low ethnic diversity. When asked about the causes of this, a dynamic of substituting any concern for it with that of nationality diversity emerged. That is, cultural diversity and the globality of the workplace were highlighted by the participants, rather than ethnic issues. The opening interview contributions of this section indicate the inappropriateness of workplaces being defined as 'multicultural and international', given they consist predominantly of white men. Regarding which, one participant stated that, "*it's a global environment so you have people from different cultures and nationalities*" (Karim, Male, Engineer, UK). In similar vein, an Egyptian expat in the UK commented that, "*we don't have two or more from the same nationality. It's only one from the same nationality. I'm Egyptian, we've got Italian, Canadian, Iranian, Chinese and Russian; sitting close to each other. I have zero problems with that at all. I mean it's actually just interesting when you have people like this."* (Faris, Software Developer, Male, UK). The UK historical and legal contexts show contradictory immigration dynamics of both inclusion and exclusion, simultaneously (Platt and Nandi, 2018). The conflicting influences of restrictive migration policies (Scott, 2017), anti-immigrant attitudes and hostility (Czaika and Di Lillo, 2018), coupled with strong anti-discrimination legislation (Platt and Nandi, 2018), have resulted in a perverse environment, which undermines cultural diversity. These dynamics might explain why white foreign cultures were more visibly present to participants than non-white ones.

Interestingly, questions relating to what citizenship should be based on (i.e. birth location, ancestors, adapting to the country's culture and laws) were not asked in the UK's last WVS questionnaire (WVS Wave 5, 2005-2009), which underlines the extent of sensitivity surrounding this phenomenon. Furthermore, participants confirmed the extremely low representation of non-white ethnics:

> *"There are not many non-white people hired, and that's an issue. There is nowhere to hide this, it is very obvious. It is there and we have to do something about it." (Sally, Female, Data Scientist, UK)*

Most participants could not provide the potential root causes of this critically low ethnic minorities' representation. Most often, they seemed to 'guess' that the problem lay with human resources hiring or recruitment activities: "*we have only one co-worker who is a person of colour. I don't know if it is because there is a shortage in African applicants or if it is just kind of a selection [bias] maybe"* (Mike, Male, Data Scientist, UK). Others attributed it to more subtle dynamics, such as cultural stereotyping, as one put it: *"I think it could be based on background, cultural, this person is behaving this way, because he is Indian or whatever, so this could be stereotyping" (Nadim, Male, Technical Sales Manager, UK)*. The social tabooing of class inequality and discrimination (Tatli *et al.*, 2012), which historically and structurally intersect with ethnicity related inequality (Hanappi-Egger and Ortlieb, 2016), can potentially contribute to this dynamic. Changes in the mainstream political discourse also highlight tension surrounding cultural and ethnic minorities. Whilst policy wise, the UK's approach consistently welcomes multiculturalism, it is increasingly less celebrated in the political discourse (Mathieu, 2018). The tension surrounding ethnic diversity brings forth the necessity of further exploration of intersectionality. For non-white women, struggles are multiplied. The interviewee below describes the thought processes she often goes through and states that these relate to both her gender and her ethnicity:

> *"It's also much the body language. Sometimes I'm conscious that I bring a different perspective to the table and I will have to review that perspective several times. […] There were a couple of times, both related to my gender maybe and my ethnic background, where I felt undervalued this way. Or I didn't feel like I had the power to make myself heard." (Alia, Female, Software Designer, UK)*

The above participant further narrated that she was often not just the only woman but also the only person of colour and that, whilst her achievements as a *'Woman of colour in Tech'* were celebrated, she was conscious that as a woman, non-white, young, engineer, she *'ticks several diversity boxes'* and hence, was 'showcased' for diversity purposes. Previous research has highlighted the broad and systemic exclusion ethnic minority women face, specifically in STEM related contexts; the root of which is difficult to capture (Charleston *et al.*, 2014). Highlighting the opposite end of the continuum, the quote below describes the privilege of fitting the 'ideal employee' image; male, white, middle class, and physically abled.

> *"Whenever I want to leave [a job] I never ever have to think about facial disfigurement race issues and certainly never age. I never had to walk into an interview thinking I'm up against it already, I walked into an interview as a 6-foot guy, you can talk well, good sense of humour, that was a great head start. […] we know in our heads there is no colour free [perception/mind-set]." (Sam, Male, Sales Manager, UK)*

Overall, the UK labour market shows that employment chances are extremely racialised (Khattab and Modood, 2015). Moreover, the social context for ethnic and cultural minorities is complex. A recent increase in anti-immigrant sentiments and racism towards minorities, highlights the need to analyse how these dynamics influence individual attitudes towards 'others' and individual levels of tolerance (Duru, Hanquinet and Cesur, 2017). This research addresses this precise question, by exploring how context mediates individual diversity attitudes. The findings show that, at an individual level, there is a tendency to be elusive with regards to ethnic minority issues. The low representation of ethnic minorities in the workplaces of the research interviewees would appear to shape their diversity perception. On the one hand, diversity of nationality appears to be a substitute for ethnic diversity, resulting in low awareness on racial inequality issues. In addition, the UK mainstream rhetoric centres on valuing multiculturalism, which can lead to individuals having a false sense of there not being a problem, as is the case with nationality diversity. The elusiveness surrounding ethnic and racial diversity is, therefore, a result of the contradictions with regards to multiculturalism as well as the socio-political shifts currently taking place in the UK.

Narrow Diversity Conceptualisations: Simplification of Inequality

> *"I don't believe we do promote diversity. We certainly promote gender equality. And we promote LGBT rights, but as for,… I don't think of those things as diversity. I think of them as just basic human rights. Diversity I don't think is something we promote; it just happens." (Ronald, Male, Engineer, UK)*

UK interviewees unanimously stated the same two diversity dimensions in response to how they would define diversity at their workplaces: gender, and sexual orientation. Participants referred to these dimensions as their organisations' top diversity priorities and the most campaigned for issues. Gender is discussed in depth in the next section of this chapter, whilst here, the focus is on LGBT, as an example of how the diversity narrative of individuals is reduced to limited diversity dimensions in the UK. Similar to the above participant, the following interviewee, describing his organisation's diversity priorities, stated that: *"So yeah gender, LGBT eligibilities and rights."* (Diego, Male, Technical Sales Manager, UK).

> *"Gay people are open about themselves, and they don't need to hide anything. The company does organise quite a lot of events. Pride in London, I participated in that one too, the company they had a band in the parade." (Thuraya, Female, Software Developer, UK)*
>
> *"It is a social norm and the LGBT community is quite represented here. This is something we definitely are not trying in the Middle East." (Sandra, Female, Technical Sales Manager, UK).*

The awareness about issues concerning gender and LGBT equality comes in accordance with the WVS categorisation of the UK as being high on self-expression (WVS, 2019). Participants reported this as their employer's top diversity priority and mentioned several LGBT campaigns (e.g. celebration of Pride, and internal LGBT networks). Based on the visibility of campaigns, they deduced that their organisations were LGBT inclusive. The dynamics of anchoring of diversity in gender and LGBT, and the continuous along with the explicit organisational propaganda on supporting sexual orientation diversity have thus been influential in diversity attitude formation. They led to the belief among some participants that there is no longer stigma surrounding sexuality and as depicted above, individuals identifying as LGBT can be open about their sexuality. Research on LGBT inclusivity, however, shows a contradicting picture. Pervasive inequalities are experienced by LGBT-identifying individuals in STEM

(Cech and Pham, 2017), these ranging from lower compensation to fewer career progression opportunities and exposure to microaggression (Theodorakopoulos and Budhwar, 2015). LGBT discrimination takes place regardless of the position, tenure, education or seniority level (Cech and Pham, 2017; Gacilo *et al.*, 2018). In addition, research suggests that ethnic minority group members identifying as LGBT are subjected to more discrimination and microaggression (Bowleg, 2008).

The following interview statement indicates that the diversity management measures implemented by organisations can lack depth: *"we received training for this [diversity] when I joined here. It wasn't that long, but it talked about respecting everybody, especially the LGBT and not [necessarily] just women. Because I believe this is not an issue anymore; people know – tend to know women exist" (Faris, Male, Software Developer, UK)*. An all-encompassing diversity training that stresses 'to respect everyone', can be a superficial solution for structural barriers faced by minorities. LGBT social identities' research shows that these identities provide unique perspectives in the workplace compared to heterosexual colleagues, however, which can be valued by the employer or be a basis for discrimination (Gacilo *et al.*, 2018). Indicating the less favourable situation for LGBT employees, an interviewee who was leading a team explained that one of his team members was '*quiet*' about his sexuality and that only after several months of trust building had he said that he was gay. Research on transgender identity inclusion in the UK context, indicates a shallow understanding of the complexity of gender identities and a neglect of challenges unique to transgender employees (i.e. experience of transition) (Öztürk and Tatli, 2016). The narrow outlook on diversity (its reduction to single prioritised dimensions), thus has led to the simplification of inequalities at the individual level. The fact that organisations celebrate Pride or create an LGBT network leads individuals to presume that no structural barriers exist. However, in many instances, individuals will not have the ability to assess the actual LGBT inclusivity of their organisations. The interviewee who stated that his team member did not disclose his sexual identity for a long period of time, highlights that issues relating to LGBT stigma are not necessarily always visible.

To summarise, the UK presents a context that – at first glance – can be perceived as more inclusive and welcoming to diversity than Germany and Egypt. However, it is argued here that the seemingly wide discussion of diversity and inclusion, does not necessarily strengthen positive individual diversity attitudes, but rather, allows for individuals to acknowledge and disregard inequality in equal measure. Comparing the national contexts included in this

research, this represents a key differentiation to the Egyptian context, where inequality is denied and made invisible. Additionally, the mechanism by which a diversity concern is tabooed influences these individual attitudes. For instance, the anti-LGBT legislation and dominance of Islam in Egypt lead to an explicit exclusion of LGBT from the diversity discourse at the individual level. Whilst in the UK, the claimed 'multiculturalism' of the national context, makes it more difficult for individuals to get to the roots of ethnic discrimination. The elusiveness of the experience of ethnic discrimination or cultural stereotyping has created a vagueness of diversity attitudes towards ethnicity, such that the problem (lack of ethnic diversity) is perceived in a superficial manner, often substituting ethnic and cultural diversity with nationality diversity. Hence, with regards to both of the themes discussed above, namely ethnicity and LGBT, diversity attitudes are shaped by the narrative surrounding each topic. Compared to both Egypt and the UK, Germany offers a 'sober' practical environment for diversity, which, whilst this can be viewed positively, since 'qualifications' and 'competence' are claimed to dominate HR processes, bears the risk of undermining structural forms of inequality.

In conclusion, the above analysis shows that the national culture influences how individuals perceive and react to diversity. This dynamic particularly applies to culturally sensitive issues. Variations within single cultures are, however, acknowledged. The above discussed attitudes and perceptions are not assumed as being universal to individuals from Egypt, Germany or the UK. They can, for example, be more vocal and aware about LGBT stigma in Egypt or the racial discrimination in the UK and Germany. The macro level analysis shows that individuals have different diversity attitudes and perceptions based on the country they live and work in. In Egypt, participants show attitudes of avoidance and apprehension towards diversity. In Germany, the individual diversity attitudes are centred on pragmatism and avoidance, and finally, in among UK participants, evasiveness and simplification were identified as diversity attitudes. The next section further shows the context-specific nature of diversity through an in-depth analysis of gender. Hence, it showcases the contextual experience of gender across Egypt, Germany and the UK.

6.3 Contextual Experience of Gender Across Cultures

> *"Men always worry about any loud voice from a girl in general." (Nihal, Female, Manager, Egypt)*
>
> *"It's easier for women working in Egypt compared to working here. Competitiveness and proving yourself is the same whether you are a man or a woman, it is still a man's world." (Mourad, Male, Engineer, Germany)*
>
> *"You're asking them to be the best professional self and to have kids and have a stable marriage, and you know, be angelic in society and also contribute to society." (Alia, Female, Software Designer, UK)*

The above statements indicate how women are perceived in each of the three researched countries. Not only does national culture influence attitudes towards diversity in general, for it also informs gender roles and influences the experiences of gender in the workplace. Gender inequalities differ in their nature, content and extent, according to the national culture context. This section discusses the contextual experience of gender, with the provision of detailed examples of how the national context shapes diversity dimensions, something that previously has often been considered universal. Gender has been chosen as an analytical focus for two key reasons. Firstly, all participants in all three countries discussed gender related dynamics in-depth. To that, participants discussed struggles faced by women in technology, organisational efforts to increase women's representation in their workforces, and the tension between women's social roles and their professional lives. Secondly, gender, as demonstrated in the literature review chapters of this thesis, especially in the sections on diversity conceptualisations and intersectionality, is a key research focus in diversity and inclusion literature. Based on the topics that the interviewees discussed in relation to gender, significantly distinct perceptions of women and their role at work and in society crystallised. The Egyptian perception of women is rooted in religion, socio-cultural values and an expectation of 'perfect femininity'. The German one is anchored in an industrialised professional positioning of women in society, whilst the UK context showed a dual perception of women as both mothers and family-oriented figures as well as employees and contributors to the economy and society.

Egypt: *'Women are Our Mothers and Wives'*

> *"What I feel at my work; the first impression applied as a woman…they are afraid of hiring a woman as they know they need engineers to be focused on their work and go to the field. By the way, the marital status is very important, all interviews have two main questions. Are you married or not? Do you have any concern about travelling abroad or not? These are the two concerns." (Yasmin, Female, Engineer, Egypt)*

The differences in gender experiences are anchored in how the social role of women in society and at work is constructed. Egypt presents a strong contrast to both Germany and the UK, which have certain similarities in the way gender is constructed. In the Egyptian context, socio-cultural traditions and values as well as religion, significantly influence the situation for and perception of women. To date, gender roles in Egypt have been rooted in society's perception of women as carers for their families. Most male interviewees stated that workplace challenges for women are caused by the social perception of the role of women in society and not by organisational or industrial dynamics. They are perceived predominantly as wives and mothers, with their primary responsibilities being to care for their husbands, children and households (Galal *et al.*, 2017). As aforementioned, according to the WVS, Egypt scores high on traditional values (Dobewall and Rudnev, 2014), which, when combined with the cultural tightness and strong sanctioning of deviating behaviours (Gelfand, Nishii and Raver, 2006; Uz, 2015), means that deviating from socially ascribed gender roles is not an easy task for women. Additionally, Egypt is ranked number 135 out of 149 countries, thus being amongst the worst countries for gender equality (World Economic Forum, 2018). These positionings explain why the cultural role of women is still limited to outdated concepts, such as marriage and household responsibility. Whilst women have been participating more in social, political, and economic spheres of life, they still continue to be challenged by patriarchal and male-dominated social dynamics and power structures (Omair, 2008). Indeed, the following statement by a bi-national (German-Egyptian) interviewee shows how he perceives the difference between the Egyptian understanding of women's role and the German one:

> *"In Egypt, the woman is supposed to do the household chores and the guy goes to work and stuff. But in Germany it depends; I was raised more or less from both sides. So, here in Germany we do chores equally. Not because I am the man then my wife has to go through all the awful chores. But again this is a perception. Some other men disagree with this opinion. You know this is definitely not the right way, this is one of*

the things that's definitely missing in terms of diversity, but this is more or less a perception of how people perceive equality among genders" (Paul, Male, Manager, Germany)

While the gender discourse is informed by colonial influences on women's rights, internal political tension impedes gender reform efforts (Megahed and Lack, 2011). Thus, in the 21st century, the role of Egyptian women still revolves around serving their husbands and children. Islamic teachings and traditions significantly influence the perceived role of women. Research has shown that, religious orthodoxy is linked to more traditional gender role beliefs and lower gender equality (Kucinskas, 2010). Egypt's values are not only centred around religion, but also, with regard to respect for and obedience of authority (Inglehart and Welzel, 2010), which is usually located with men (Omair, 2008; Kucinskas, 2010). Finally, Egypt's high score on uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede *et al.,* 2010) and the high value of family ties due to its collectivist nature (Hennekam and Tahssain-Gay, 2015), create a negative diversity atmosphere for gender (Hofhuis, Van Der Zee and Otten, 2012). The second significant aspect influencing gender construction is women's femininity, such that women are perceived as feminine and delicate. As suggested by the quote below, this is directly reflected in workplace dynamics. Whilst the attitude is framed as being about respecting and preserving women, they are still excluded and treated differently.

"Our culture does not prevent women from joining the workplace, it is all about preserving her from running into improper situations. Yes, we do differentiate between dealing with men or women, but from the cultural perspective, not for prohibiting the woman from working. There is a different kind of respect to women colleagues and different kind of dealing, not because she is not accepted at work, but to put her in a very respectable situation." (Youssef, Male, Engineer, Egypt)

The above opinion was expressed repeatedly by male interviewees. The barriers to women's progression in the technology industry were more often than not, related to the industry's working conditions. Examples of the working conditions are: night shifts, working on engineering sites (especially at night), dealing with workers on site, continuously staying up to date with technology (which requires time commitment beyond working hours), working at engineering sites during the summertime (and dealing with the heat) and working overtime. Overall, participants emphasised that women need to be 'protected', 'shielded' and 'preserved' from these conditions for two reasons. First, the alleged 'different' physical ability and

endurance of women and second, the importance of upholding their social image as 'morally good women'. who stay mainly at home and do not work night shifts or socialise with 'strangers'. Hence, the reason why women are excluded is systemically connected to the job, to – as said by the following interviewee –, thereby denying any claims of gender discrimination:

> "*There is no discrimination, but there is some jobs and they [HR] the closest ones to the diversity issue, they claim it is because of the job; it's the nature of the job, habibi, not because of me.*" (Ramy, Male, Engineer, Egypt).

Indeed, when asked whether they have been treated unfairly or discriminated against, women interviewees usually referred to situations where they did not apply for certain jobs, because the job descriptions stated they were only for male applicants. In line with these statements, structural issues were investigated in terms of how they influence women's careers in Egypt. Marriage and childcare are the two key reasons women leave their employment and hence, policy reform regarding maternity leave, child support and flexible hours can enhance women's participation in work (World Bank, 2010). The marital gender roles, thus, directly shape women's reality at work. Progress with regards to these challenging work environments is however slow. The collectivist nature of society pressures women into often accepting the status quo in an attempt to maintain peace and harmony, thus having to rely on future generations to achieve gender equality (Henry, 2011). This explains the continuous prevalence of patriarchy and unequal gender realities (Samari, 2019). In sum, Egyptian women's employment conditions are heavily influenced by their ascribed cultural role. The prevailing femininity standards and the perception of women as less physically able than men, influence women's work in the Egyptian technology industry, particularly engineers and other technological roles.

Germany and the UK: *'Gendered Work Context'*

> *"Mostly it's about career progression and sometimes it's about not being heard and understanding how to get the most out of the environment you are in and how you present yourself. It's like the female version of an all boys' club, where she is able to have that support network." (Alia, Female, Software Designer, UK)*

The situation for women is significantly different in Germany and the UK compared to Egypt. The fact that these two are different national contexts withstanding, comparing women's perspectives in three countries shows that in the UK and Germany women's challenges are career-related. In both countries, gender is a central theme in anti-discriminatory legislation as well as diversity management. The key difference is the disregard of cultural integration in Germany and of class inequality in the UK (Tatli *et al.*, 2012). Gender issues in both countries are thus moderated by the diversity management business case, instead of the cultural role ascribed to women. Compared to Egypt's patriarchal environment, the gender discussion is more progressive. Topics addressed by UK and German interviewees ranged from women quotas to women's networks, gender pay gaps, maternity policies, childcare facilities and representation of women in leadership positions.

> *"I think it was my first or second week in the new organisation and we had a management meeting with all directors of the company. So, I just came into the room with 50 people or something, and I was the only female person entering the room, and I was like "wow, why am I here?" Oh, there is another lady, so I sat next to her and asked hi what are you doing here? So, she is also a director, so we are two female directors. Only two female directors." (Stephanie, Female, Director, Germany)*

Despite the more positive outlook for women in the UK and Germany, certain challenges prevail. The low representation of women, especially in leadership and director positions, is a key problem. The roots of it being challenging for women to reach senior positions in organisations lie in the 'Think Manager Think Male' phenomenon, whereby men are inherently considered better leaders than women (Koenig *et al.*, 2011; Ryan *et al.*, 2011). The technology industry further contributes to the gender dilemma. As highlighted by the interview excerpt below, this industry shows an even lower representation of women in leadership or senior positions than for many other industries. The business case for diversity in technology is highly contextual and real change in the industry culture requires support of leaders of organisations, who are usually white and male (Wright *et al.*, 2014).

> *"Women in different sectors, I see they are more, I want to say, powerful. They grasp control. In banking, for instance, in commerce, marketing, you find that a good job actually is delivered by females and ICT is not the same. It is very rare to see a leading female in a pure technical role. And again, it is as I was telling you earlier, it is not the company. It is something to do with social norms." (Sandra, Female, Technical Sales Manager, UK)*

In addition to the low representation of women in technology, in general and in senior positions in particular, maternity was addressed, i.e. the role of women as mothers was discussed. The key difference to Egyptian perspectives was that becoming a mother (and wife) in Egypt was deemed inevitable for women and it automatically excluded them from employment. Both the UK and Germany historically and politically have experienced a 'male breadwinner' culture, which has changed through the introduction of employment policies that are family oriented (Fleckenstein and Lee, 2014). Despite this development, parental leave policies in the European context do not achieve gender equity (Castro-García and Pazos-Moran, 2016). Additionally, German childcare support is considered more advanced than the UK model (Taylor-Gooby *et al.*, 2020). The statement by a European participant below sheds light on the dilemma women face, in that the financial burden of childcare often results in women having to give up their careers.

> *"So, I was very surprised that the UK, a developed country in terms of diversity, has so many limits and not only that, for childcare is extremely expensive. Kindergarten for kids is 30K a year or something. It is cheaper for the family for the woman to stay home." (Susan, Female, Sales Manager, UK)*

In a nutshell, maternity was discussed in Egypt, Germany and the UK. However, the Western perspective focused on policy and on dual role of women as both mothers and employees. The Middle Eastern perspective often presumed women's role as mothers first and then, employees second. Regarding women in technology, women interviewees in Germany and the UK highlighted either the lack or ineffectiveness of diversity management policies: the fallout from women's quotas, the inadequacy of maternity policies, the lack of women's networks, and the absence of appropriate career progression guidance, amongst others. The macro national context influences the experience of diversity management at the individual micro level (Pringle and Ryan, 2015). In Germany, the origins of diversity management are anchored in

gender equality and in supporting women's progression in their careers (Süβ and Kleiner, 2008). Yet, despite this focus on gender, diversity management policies fail to create gender inclusive workplaces, or even a balanced representation of women, as exemplified by a study in a Diversity Charta member company, which even won a prize for its outstanding diversity management practices (Vassilopoulou, 2017).

> *"Here in Germany we do chores equally, for example. It doesn't mean that, because I am the man my wife has to go through all the awful chores. But again, this is a perception. Some other men disagree with this opinion. This is definitely not the right way, that's definitely missing in terms of diversity, but this is more or less a perception of how people perceive equality among genders. (Paul, Male, Manager, Germany)*

Context-specific perceptions of women are observed at an individual level. The above interviewee describes how these different perceptions do not always find their way into diversity management discussions. The interviewee gave the above answer in response to the question of what he perceived to possibly be missing from diversity discourses he observed in his work environment. Research has shown that individuals construct the meanings of gender and work subconsciously, with the resulting constructs being shaped by the national culture (Moore, 2015). The WVS captures differences in general gender attitudes at the national level, which are traceable in findings of this research. For example, among the respondents, 83.4% of Egyptians agreed that men were more entitled to work than women, while only 15.5% German respondents agreed with this (WVS Database, 2013). Additionally, 3.5% German, 72.9% Egyptian and 3.9% UK respondents agreed that men are more competent political leaders than women. Whilst 2.9% German, 63.1% Egyptian and 2.7% UK respondents agreed that men were better business executives than women (WVS Database, 2008). Questions about the extent to which it is justifiable for a husband to beat his wife, were omitted from the survey in Egypt, while the vast majority of UK and German respondents stated that it is never justifiable (WVS Database, 2008). These extremely different opinions and perceptions of women are, as has been discussed in this section, rooted in social and cultural values and norms. Hence, the progress of gender beliefs in relation to equality in Europe and the continuing challenges in Muslim and Arab countries (Voicu and Voicu, 2016), are reflected in findings of this research. The fact that contextualisation of diversity management practices is necessary for them to be effective (Hennekam, Tahssain-Gay and Syed, 2017), further indicates that inequalities addressed by these policies are context-specific.

To summarise the contextual experience of gender, the interviewee below describes the difference between being an Engineer in the UK and her home country, Sri Lanka. She highlights the importance of enabling women to do their jobs (i.e. logistically), as well as the different perception of marital status in both cultures.

> *"One of the things that I find important in order to be a woman in tech is to have the infrastructure and the support culture to be able to do what I do… so I can take the tube at midnight and be ok. If I consider moving to Sri Lanka and working there, part of my hesitation is that it's just a very different culture to be a single woman in Sri Lanka, than it is to be here and so to be able to work and contribute is different." (Alia, Female, Software Designer, UK)*

The dissimilar challenges faced by women in the Middle Eastern context of Egypt versus the Western context of Germany and the UK highlight the role of culture in gender dynamics. The key obstacle for women in Egypt is anchored in the duality of patriarchal structures and their socially ascribed role as wives and mothers. The UK and Germany, albeit more progressive, show several career related obstacles and low effectiveness of gender diversity policies. The gender rhetoric among Egyptian participants was thus shaped by socio-cultural dynamics, whereas that in Germany and the UK has been driven by the business case for diversity. At a macro national level, these findings reveal the necessity of considering the national culture for an understanding of diversity and designing effective diversity policies. These findings show that the national culture impacts how diversity is experienced and perceived by individuals belonging to similar groups across countries. Namely, this research is conducted with technology industry employees in the three research countries. As such, interviewees have similar educational backgrounds, and are exposed to similar working conditions, yet, as demonstrated in this section, experience gender related challenges differently.

6.4 Summary and Conclusion: Macro Level Analysis

In this chapter, the analysis and findings of the influence of national culture on diversity perceptions and attitudes have been presented. The context of each of Egypt, Germany, and the UK has revealed unique environments for diversity. The contrast between the three cultures is manifested in Egypt's Middle Eastern and Germany and the UK's Western orientations. The diversity case in Egypt is challenging with regards to strict prescribed gender roles, marginalisation of ethnic minorities, suppression of LGBT groups, and segregation of religious minorities. At the individual level, these dynamics are reinforced by a strong nationalistic identity, which results in structural inequalities being made invisible. Germany's values, which emphasise industry, individuality and secularism, have led to pragmatic approaches to diversity, with the focus being on organisational diversity management. The country's historical and political contexts have resulted in an obfuscation of the inequality faced by ethnic minorities and a subtle form of racism. Finally, the UK's recent political and social shifts, its history with immigration have produced contradictory multiculturalism experiences. At the individual level, evasiveness regarding ethnic minority issues and a general restriction of diversity consideration to gender and sexual orientation is observed.

The different attitudes towards diversity are situated in the societal, historical and political dynamics of each country. The influence of national country culture on diversity perceptions has thus been revealed. The practical implications for organisations (which often tend to export their diversity and HR policies on a transnational basis) can be challenging. That is, campaigning for or supporting inclusion of certain diversity dimension can be required by law in one country and yet, criminalised another.

Gender dynamics have been explored and compared for Egypt, the UK and Germany. The comparison of interviewee gender rhetoric has demonstrated how national context shapes diversity. Women are still disadvantaged, underrepresented and discriminated against (almost) universally, but the nature of challenges has been found to differ significantly amongst Egypt, Germany and the UK. Women in Egypt face challenges rooted in their perceived cultural role in society, whilst in the UK and Germany, issues faced by woman are more directly related to their careers.

Chapter 7

Exploration of Diversity Management Perceptions in the Technology Industry

Introduction to the Chapter

The aim of this chapter is to explore how organisational and sectoral diversity policies influence experiences of diversity and inclusion. Individual perceptions of diversity management are explored to investigate whether or not the nature of the industrial and organisational context shapes diversity perceptions. The chapter is divided into three sections. Firstly, a conceptual framework presenting managerial aspects that shape diversity management practices is presented. Secondly, a sectoral overview of diversity and inclusion in technology is presented, highlighting key issues in the industry, predominantly the lack of gender and ethnic diversity. In addition, the diversity and inclusion emphasis as well as the policies of the organisations included in this research are summarised. Finally, the diversity management perceptions that emerged through data analysis are discussed through three themes: the gap between organisational narratives and employee needs, poor engagement with diversity management and cynical attitudes towards organisational commitment to diversity. The analysis shows that organisational practices and individual perceptions of needs with regards to diversity operate in separate spaces. That is, the tension between organisational rhetoric and individual needs and perceptions is identified.

7.1 Meso Level Analysis: Diversity Management Perceptions

> *"Until yesterday or until an hour ago, diversity to me was about having equity between men and women. Now, it's the diversity of everything: gender, age, educational background, everything." (Ezz, Male, Engineer, Egypt)*

This chapter explores how organisational and industry dynamics influence individual diversity perceptions. Gender, or the low representation of women, is a main theme in the technology industry in terms of diversity and hence, also in this research. The above statement was made by the participant at the end of the interview, where he explained how until he went through this in-depth discussion of diversity, it was merely about gender. The statement captures the dynamic addressed here: when organisations focus exclusively on gender in the name of diversity and inclusion, there is a risk of these becoming synonymous. This then, as shown throughout the chapter, influences employee perceptions of diversity management practices. As aforementioned, the relational approach to diversity management considers the interplay

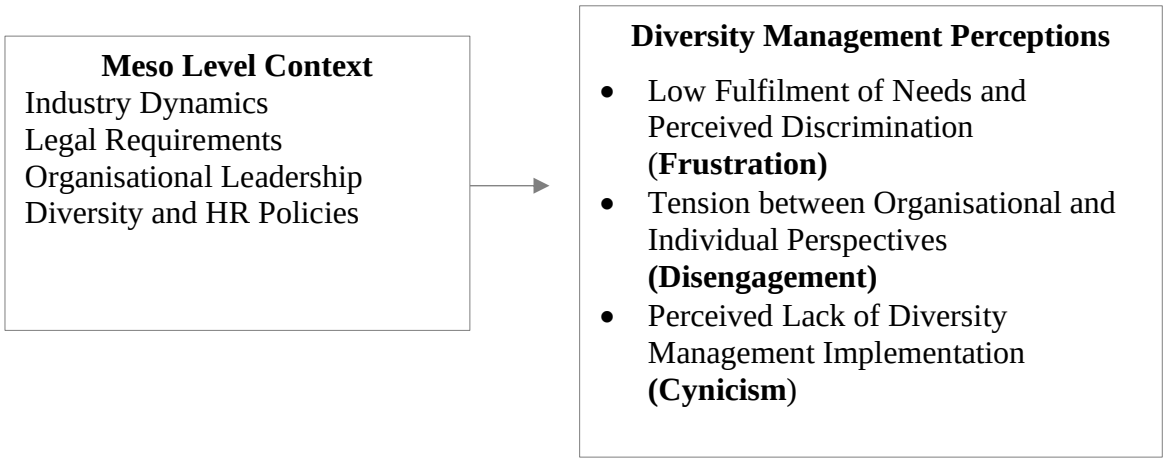
between macro level contextual factors, such as laws and national cultures, meso level organisational diversity policies and micro level individual factors, such as identities and agency (Syed and Özbilgin, 2009). In this chapter, the meso level of analysis is the focus, which encompasses both the industry and organisational contexts. The relationship between organisational contexts and individuals and its influence on equality at work are addressed (Forstenlechner, Lettice and Özbilgin, 2012). The meso level is shaped through factors, such as: resource allocation, diversity and equality policies, benchmarking and target identification, awareness and training (Hennekam, Tahssain-Gay and Syed, 2017). Whilst the implementation and study of diversity management practices are on the increase, there remains a lack of research on employee perceptions of these practices and there is little known about diversity practices as experienced by employees (Otaye-Ebede, 2018).

For this research, employee perception of diversity management was explored in terms of several elements: awareness of implemented diversity policies, perception of organisations as inclusive and equal, perceived gaps in diversity policies implementation and the perceived equality of opportunities (e.g. promotion, pay and career path). Accordingly, the following aspects were discussed in depth with the interviewees: what diversity policies or initiatives they knew of, whether diversity and/or inclusion was communicated through any official organisational channels, who was responsible for managing diversity (a department, a team, a manager or HR), what diversity topics were prioritised in the organisation and whether they believed any diversity issues or social groups were underrepresented or not present in the organisation. The research findings are conceptualised by integrating three perspectives: diversity management and organisational culture literature, diversity in the technology industry and diversity dimensions as well as policies communicated by the organisations included in this research.

In general, this chapter shows the misalignment between diversity management practice and employee perceptions. Specifically, it is shown that employee perceptions of and experiences with, diversity management are detached from claimed organisational efforts, Figure 6 summarises the research findings relating to the meso level factors. The figure shows that industry dynamics, legal compliance requirements, the leadership diversity narrative as well as diversity and human resources management policies implemented by organisations, influence individual diversity perceptions. Diversity perceptions are manifested in: employee needs fulfilment, perceived equality, knowledge of diversity management and trust in organisations.

Interviewees in this research voiced three reactions to diversity management: frustration about unfulfilled needs and perceived discrimination, low engagement with diversity management owing to the ambiguity and vagueness surrounding it as well as cynicism and mistrust in the organisation due to a perceived lack of commitment to the phenomenon.

Figure 6: Influence of Industry and Organisation on Diversity Management Perceptions



Source: Maatwk, 2020

7.1.1 Industry Dynamics

Gender is a central topic in diversity research and practice. The research participants unianimously, and in all countries in this research, stated that the inclusion of women in technology was both a top priority and challenge for their organisations. This is rooted in the masculinity of technology itself (Hatmaker, 2013; Powell, Bagilhole and Dainty, 2009; Adam *et al.*, 2006) and gender imbalance in STEM education, causes employment trends to be heavily male dominated (European Commission, 2019; The Tech Partnership, 2016). Additionally, the fast pace of technological change and the harsh working conditions attributed to technology work – according to the majority of male participants – detract from the inclusion of women. The industry an organisation is embedded within thus influences managerial practices (Nielsen, 2009) and those operating in the same industry usually implement similar human resources management and operational practices (Bizri, 2018). The technology focus creates a further inequality dynamic. Individuals traditionally perceived as qualified, by having attained a technology based university education, are often considered an elite compared to those with less specific or no technology related education (Marks and Scholarios, 2007). In general, disadvantages in the industry go beyond gender and education. Recent research reports that, to

date, women, ethnic minorities, individuals with disabilities, among others are disadvantaged (Leung, 2018). The legal framework organisations must comply with also influences diversity management policies. As aforementioned, for this research, diversity management perceptions were investigated in three countries: Egypt, Germany and the UK with different labour law regulations influencing diversity practices. Egypt's labour law stipulates a 5% quota for individuals with disabilities (Law no. 12, 2003). In fact, the Egyptian constitution prohibits discrimination on grounds of: religion, belief, sex, origin, race, colour, language, disability, social class as well as political or geographical affiliation (Egyptian Constitution, 2014). However, any LGBT related activities or the support thereof, is criminalised by the Egyptian law (Ahmady, 2018). Germany and the UK both follow anti-discrimination acts, as mandated by the European Union. The following protected characteristics are stated: sex, colour, social or ethnic origin, genetic features, religion or belief, language, political (or other) opinion, national minority membership, disability, age, sexual orientation, birth and property (European Union, 2000). Whilst these regulations have significant implications for diversity policies within the EU, international firms that have overarching diversity policies cannot implement them in some foreign contexts. For instance, supporting LGBT inclusivity or even referring to it in Egypt is banned.

7.1.2 Organisational Context

Recent literature suggests that employee perceptions of diversity management practices are captured through: communication of diversity training objectives, ethnic minorities mentors, formal feedback on diversity management, resources allocated for diversity training and awareness, conducting of diversity training along with evaluation of its effectiveness, availability of diversity material and communication on diversity with employees (Otaye-Ebede, 2018). Moreover, organisations hold implicit or explicit diversity values, which influence their approach to diversity management (Olsen and Martins, 2012). Since the organisational culture functions as a social control system, which shapes the behaviours and attitudes of its members (Chatman and O'Reilly, 2016), it influences employee values, such as tolerance of and respect for diversity and acceptance of differences or the new/unfamiliar (Onea, 2012). In short, employee perceptions of diversity management efforts; the perceived extent to which their employers implement diversity management policies and encourage an organizational climate of inclusion, is explored (Mor Barak *et al.*, 2016). Organisational diversity values are communicated through various channels. Organisational vision and mission statements have been studied as elements of the diversity management index, in terms

of whether diversity and inclusion are explicitly mentioned in these (Sabharwal, 2014). Leadership is a key process in managing diversity and creating inclusive organisational cultures, with leadership commitment to fostering inclusion being essential (e.g. Martins and Terblanche, 2003; Pless and Maak, 2004; Randel *et al.*, 2018; Sabharwal, 2014). Inclusive leadership, in particular, strengthens employees' sense of belongingness to their teams and organisations, whilst sustaining their uniqueness and individuality (Randel *et al.,* 2018). Nonetheless, it is insufficient merely to focus on hiring a more diverse workforce (Bendick, Lou Egan and Lanier, 2010), instead, leadership must focus on eliminating systemic barriers and creating inclusive organisational structures (Sabharwal, 2014). Therefore, to analyse in depth the influence of the meso level on diversity perceptions, interviewees were asked about official diversity communication by their organizations, whether organizational leadership were involved in any diversity related activities or communication, and what the organizational diversity priorities were.

7.1.3 Human Resources and Diversity Management Policies

Inclusive organisations are held as being those that have compliance policies in place, such as: recruitment of socially protected categories, diversity training, harassment and discrimination claims management as well as the management of subtle discrimination and micro inequities (Shore, Cleveland and Sanchez, 2018). Human resources functions, such as promotions, transparent recruitment as well as and training and development, are key pillars of diversity and inclusion (Daya, 2014). In essence, inclusive working contexts are built upon policies that encourage equal treatment of employees and the simultaneous acknowledgment of individual differences (Janssens and Zanoni, 2008). Classical diversity management policies include: formalised HRM practices (recruitment, selection, promotions, layoff decisions, performance appraisal and pay structures), diversity training, dedicated mentoring and networking initiatives; however, the effectiveness of these practices has been questioned (Janssens and Zanoni, 2014; Sabharwal, 2014). Key themes or dimensions in diversity management are: gender, ethnicity, age, culture, disability and sexual orientation (Theodorakopoulos and Budhwar, 2015).

Research indicates that diversity managers and employees have differing understandings of such management. That is, whilst managers focus on the specific policies in place, employees are more interested in how policies are communicated and operationalised (Otaye-Ebede, 2018). It has been argued that, the management of diversity is insufficient on its own. Instead,

the focus should be on creating inclusion at work and promoting the self-esteem of employees as well as considering their views, all of which are essential for enhancing workplace performance (Sabharwal, 2014). To explore the influence of diversity policy on diversity perception, interviewees' understanding of what diversity management is, was explored. The extent to which diversity management was being implemented in their organisations is also discussed. The interviews, thus, focused on the diversity policies participants knew of: who was responsible for diversity management; whether and if so, how diversity goals, policies and achievements were reported; as well as what diversity topics were communicated. In short, the meso level analysis includes: organisational dynamics (Syed and Özbilgin, 2009), industry demographics and diversity dynamics (Hatmaker, 2013; Powell, Bagilhole and Dainty, 2009; Joshi and Roh, 2009; Nielsen, 2009), organisational culture and values (Olsen and Martins, 2012; Onea, 2012), organisational diversity vision (Pless and Maak, 2004) and leadership support (Randel *et al.*, 2018; Sabharwal, 2014).

7.2 Diversity and Inclusion in the Researched Organisations

> "*There is diversity, but it's rare to find anyone in the age group 50+; you wouldn't find those. Educational background, I can say they are the same, but people are not hired based on their educational background, but rather, on their skills and history." (Ezz, Male, Engineer, Egypt)*

The above quote shows the paradoxical nature of diversity perceptions; one shared by many of this research's interviewees. It shows a clear 'yes, we are diverse', then the participant goes on to describe a homogenous workforce in terms of age and educational background, which indicates the limited diversity he perceives. In the following, the diversity and inclusion aspects communicated by organisations in this research are summarised. Table 10 below is a summary of diversity and inclusion communicated on the focal organisations' websites and/or in reports. The channels for reporting information differed across organisations and, hence several sources had to be reviewed for diversity and inclusion related information. The information listed below is extracted from one or more of the following sources for each organisation: financial reports, corporate social responsibility reports, diversity and inclusion reports, online diversity portals/websites and/or online corporate social responsibility portals/websites. Regarding which, two aspects are covered: firstly, the organisation's definition of diversity, evident in the diversity dimensions stated online, is presented. Secondly, the diversity policies or emphasis, as stated by the organisation, are summarised. More detailed information on the implementation of the stated policies is not available. For instance, how organisations strategically increase their women employees, how the gender pay gap is addressed, or the nature of support available to minority groups, are not reported upon. In addition, for the majority of the organisations, the information listed below was not available in one unified source, but rather, was dispersed across several of the abovementioned sources. In sum, all the organisations, with one exception, communicate their commitment to multiple diversity aspects and list policies, emphasising how diversity and inclusion are managed. In the next section, the participants' perceptions on the diversity management approach of their organisations are discussed. The empirical findings are presented and situated at the meso analysis level.

Table 10: Diversity Emphasis in Corporate Reports and/or on Websites

	Company	*Diversity Dimensions*	*Diversity Emphasis and/or Policies*
1	TelCo	Board diversity; gender; age; LGBT; ethnic minorities; nationality; disability.	Code of conduct; multicultural networks; minority focus groups; disability awareness measures; women's quota.
2	CallMe	Gender; disability; class; age; board diversity.	Diversity policy; awareness raising campaigns; social dialogue on diversity; gender pay gap elimination goal.
3	MobilCom	Gender; age; culture; disability.	Cultural dialogue workshops; childcare facilities in some branches.
4	MobilMe	Age; gender; geographical location.	Women in management support; career development and training.
5	HomeTech	Gender; age; culture; religion; sexual orientation; ethnicity.	Diversity team; transparent pay structures; women in leadership and on boards; codes of conduct and human rights.
6	TechOrg	Gender; religion; ethnicity; nationality; age; disability.	Women in management positions; equality and anti-discrimination policies.
7	TechMind	Cognitive perspectives; work experiences; gender; ethnicity; race; sexuality; education; disability; political affiliations; parental status: social status; gender identity; pregnancy; marital status.	Quotas for age, gender, and nationality; governance code for diversity; board diversity; global awareness campaigns for gender and cultural diversity; global diversity committee responsible for managing diversity.
8	BlueTech	Gender; age; nationality; religion; union membership; disabilities; opinions; ethnicity; sexuality; race; gender identity.	Codes of conduct; gender balance; girls in STEM; integration of diversity into human resources management; work-life balance; video material on unconscious bias available to employees.
9	TechKnow	Ethnicity; gender; parental status; sexuality; gender	Women in technology; communities for minority groups;

		identity; race; religion; disabilities.	material on unconscious bias available to employees; inclusive recruitment policies; mentoring programmes; diversity training.
10	TechLov	Gender; LGBT; ethnicity; race.	Women in leadership; women's quota; minority task forces; employee dialogue; inclusive hiring processes
11	DeepTech	No information available	No information available
12	SpeedTech	Gender; race; ethnicity; gender identity; class; disability; age; religion.	Diversity and inclusion training; career support for women in technology; diversity groups in some countries.
13	HipIT	Backgrounds; gender; ethnicity; points of view; perspectives; ideas; sexual orientation; gender identity; religion; disability; race; age.	Diversity training to create inclusive cultures for managers; online training for dealing with unconscious bias; compliance with equal opportunities and affirmative action laws; anti-discrimination policies; hiring of qualified individuals with criminal history or veterans with disabilities; career support groups for individuals from underrepresented groups.
14	GTech	Gender; age; sexual orientation; ethnicity; gender identity; disabilities; culture; ideas; beliefs.	Support for gender transition; initiatives for increasing representation of women in STEM; initiatives for inclusion of LGBT employees and older aged employees; human resources management strategies and partnerships for recruitment of minority group members; work-life balance initiatives; diversity committees.
15	EduTech	Gender; ethnicity; cultural background; disabilities; race; parental status; age; sexual orientation; class.	Data on equal pay published; internal surveys for perceived inclusion of organisation; analysis of representation of women and ethnic minorities in leadership

			positions; internal networks for diversity; caregiver leave;
16	DoIT	Gender; ethnicity; cultural background; intersection of race and gender; social equity; disability; age; sexuality; religion; gender identity.	Gender and ethnic diversity in leadership positions; career development and sponsorship for minority group members; unconscious bias training; gender neutral parental benefits; networks for women, individuals with disabilities, religious minorities, ethnic minorities, and individuals interested in diversity.
17	TechChamp	Gender; ethnicity; cultural background; age; nationality; sexual minorities; disabilities; nursing caregivers	Performance based pay; childcare facilities at the workplace in some countries; diversity networks in some countries; diversity of board of directors emphasised; diversity training; programme for re-employment after retirement.
18	TranTech	Gender; religious beliefs; nationality; age; ethnic background; sexual orientation and identity; ideology.	Women's representation on boards quota; childcare facilities at some locations; flexible work time models; consideration of diversity in recruitment and hiring processes.

*Sources: various company websites and reports (2018-2019)

7.3 Empirical Findings:Individual Diversity Management Perceptions

Based on the conceptual framework presented in section 7.1 and the organisational overview discussed in section 7.2, diversity management perceptions are explored by analysing what participants are aware of in terms of policies, whether they perceive leadership to be supportive of and committed to diversity and inclusion as well as the extent to which they perceive to be fairly treated in terms of career development and equal opportunities regarding hiring and promotions. The data analysis revealed the tension between organisational narratives and policies and employee perceptions. Three themes are discussed in this section, the gap between what organisations claim to implement and what employees actually need, the ambiguity surrounding diversity management in practice and finally, cynicism and mistrust towards organisational efforts.

7.3.1 Employee Needs vs. Diversity Management: Mind the Gap

> *"They communicate in some events related to diversity like women events, not always, but it is mentioned and it is usually always mainly about gender, they measure it this way. I think they always refer to diversity by gender. I am not very involved with them so I don't not want to judge, but what reaches me as an employee is always gender, women, and things like that." (Noah, Male, Engineer, Egypt)*

Diversity management perceptions of interviewees – the subjects these policies have been designed for – indicate a gap between what they perceived as organisational priorities and commitments and what they needed in terms of diversity policies. The discussion below provides, first, an overview of interviewee perceptions and subsequently, their needs, as expressed by them, are presented. Perceptions of DM policies of employees can be summarised in a UK interviewee's statement: *"When we talk about diversity, it's always women and that's hardly ever any other form of diversity. (…) By 2020, they're aiming for 40% women in our senior leadership, so that's the target they set and considering where we are, it's a harsh target to reach." (Alia, Female, Software Designer, UK)*. In other words, diversity is talked about, if not exclusively, but to a great extent, only in terms of gender, and goals are not achieved (or achievable). Unanimously, participants agreed that their organisations' leadership regularly expressed commitment to and the importance of diversity and inclusion. Commitment was

expressed through speeches at company events or written communication to employees. Most commonly, official communications addressed gender related diversity and the lack of women in technology, as illustrated by a human resources manager in Egypt, *"For a very long time, because we were very focused on gender, that was the main thing when we talked about diversity we talked about gender diversity but then the other issues started to come up like disability."* A UK engineer, on the other hand, stressed that diversity was mainly about women and ethnic minorities, *"Definitely women and also including more non-white males in general; even if the company is international and people come from everywhere there is still a big percentage of white males."*

In a few company cases, policies for cultural diversity, cognitive diversity and reintegration of women after maternity, were implemented and perceived useful by participants. However, these organisations can be considered exceptions, for the majority focused on gender and disability/LGBT policies. The relevant policies interviewees were aware of are: women's quotas in all three countries, quotas for individuals with disabilities in Egypt, celebration of pride in the UK, and international women's day. According to a review of organisations' reports and websites, several other diversity priorities exist: age, ethnicity, nationalities, cultural background, board diversity, female STEM education, and achieving gender balance at senior managerial levels. However, interviewees were not aware of most other priorities reported by organisations. An in-depth understanding and awareness of the organisation's goals (if they were implemented as reported) were not evident. A proper vision and mission, translated into specific goals, is necessary for strategically managing diversity (Pitts, 2006) and communication of these is essential for their effectiveness (Pless and Maak, 2004). It has been asserted that the disconnect between employee perspectives and organisational mission means there is no shared understanding regarding the organisation's diversity and inclusion goals (Kopaneva and Sias, 2015). Whilst organisations did have a diversity mission, and inclusion vision statements (available through their websites under an 'our people/ or equivalent' section), interviewees lacked awareness of their existence, which is similarly the case for other initiatives mentioned on company websites (such as career development, for example). Nonetheless, the following discussion of the perceptions specified by participants indicates that such initiatives are not being effectively implemented 'on the ground'. The disparity between individual needs and their perceptions of organisational policies becomes evident when

considering what interviewees deemed lacking in terms of DM. Commonly mentioned needs by the participants were: (1) class equality, (2) equal opportunities with regards to promotion and career path and (3) work-life balance (particularly with regards to maternity and women coming back to work after maternity leave). Class equality was viewed from an educational perspective, whereby several participants stated that their organisations limited their hiring to specific elite universities. For example, one training manager in Egypt mentioned her organisation's policy of favouring elite university graduates and then, she explained how the approach had gradually changed:

> *"…it was requested to have people from the special universities in the managerial departments in the headquarters. We have a majority of graduates from elite universities. Recently, we started to change that blood. I believe that the start was myself. I do not know what happened actually maybe the change in HRM, in the management itself maybe the new chief officers have another plan, maybe because a lot of people were frustrated and a lot of exit interviews were done and the common complaint was that we do not have any chance to move up within the company, because we graduated from normal universities, not private ones." (Nihal, Female, Manager, Egypt)*

The above statement not only explicitly states a classist hiring bias (since the universities mentioned by the participant are expensive and perceived as elite/upper-class), but it also sheds light on the ambiguity surrounding diversity management; employees generally are not aware of *'who does what'*. The lack of knowledge surrounding diversity management implementation was shared by a majority of interviewees and is discussed in the next theme in this chapter. Several other participants, moslty working in Egypt, confirmed this trend of *'university elitism'*, where individuals from elite universities are preferred to other individuals in the hiring processes. This elitism contributes to interviewees' perceptions of inequality and their sense of frustration. Secondly, individuals expressed challenges relating to their career development and perceived discrimination. As this quote exemplifies, individuals lacked guidance on their career opportunities and next steps: *"How am I supposed to know the possibilities of my path, if I do not get guidance from people who are more experienced and know more than I know? But then I realised it's not something unusual, unfortunately, this is the way the company is dealing with career progression" (Taymour, Male, Engineer, Egypt)*. In this interviewee's

case, he clearly lacked guidance on career development, which is an essential component of diversity management, aimed at ensuring equal opportunity to enter and rise in an organisation (Shen *et al.*, 2009; Armstrong *et al.*, 2010).

In other instances, promotions were perceived to be biased and to favour 'convenient' diversity checkboxes for the organisation: *"It was only a few weeks after the diversity and inclusion training. Like, he is gay, so this will be an easy checkbox for the manager to have him. As a team leader, after all, he can be talented as well so he can really deserve, but some people think about that." (Mike, Male, Data Scientist, UK)*. Or as several female interviewees in Egypt stated, specific jobs were given to men, because the working conditions (long hours, traveling to network installation sites, etc.) were considered too rough for women. This, once again, highlights the necessity of contextualising diversity management policies (Evans, 2012; Forstenlechner, Lettice and Özbilgin, 2012; Hennekam, Tahssain-Gay and Syed, 2017).

The third need raised by many participants was about work-life balance, in general and maternity or gender-related work-life balance, in particular. The nature of the industry, in particular, the continuously advancing technologies, necessitates continuous learning and development, mostly through self-effort. The majority of female and male interviewees stated that this involved extra time commitment and this was particularly challenging for the former, because of their 'other social roles' as mothers and family carers. Only one out of the 18 organisations had implemented policies to support women, which was celebrated by many interviewees, in addition to having onsite childcare facilities. The interviewee stated that:

> *"Another thing with regards to inclusion are working mums, they [her employer] work on some benefits for working mums; they do have flexibility in working hours and if they want to work as part time they have the option to work as part timers, especially the first few years after giving birth" (Samira, Female, HR Manager, Egypt)*

Finally, the quote below from an interviewee in Germany shows that individuals need more practical solutions and a context-specific approach, as opposed to leadership declarations that do not necessarily reflect on employees' day to day life at work. When asked about whether he thought the organisation needed diversity management, he explained that:

> *"I think that anything beyond the boundaries that the organisation draws when hiring someone. So, once employed you sign the code of conduct the boundaries and limits are clearly shown, anything beyond that needs to be done through the organisational culture, and not by just making policies. In all firms, there are so many policies and statements; the new one [set of policies] we have now is the third one introduced since I joined, and I have only been here four years. I think just because management announces something, doesn't mean it will work. It would only work, if for example, someone who is discriminated against files a complaint and the organisation reacts and deals with it." (Tobias, Male, Engineer, Germany)*

The evident gap between organisational diversity narratives and management policies as well as employee needs in terms of diversity management can be attributed to the different views on diversity. Organisational effort was often focused solely on recruiting and hiring a more diverse workforce, which is insufficient for creating inclusion (Bendick *et al.*, 2010). The perceptual disparity evident here is in confirmation with the conceptualisation of diversity management perceptions by Otaye-Ebede (2018), which suggests that employees' perceptions and manager perceptions of diversity management are incongruent, and that practices should be narrowed down to ones employees deem necessary.

> *"I think one thing that we need to talk more about is if diverse people are comfortable in their environment. I see this is neglected a lot, you have to protect the diverse people if you get them in that diverse culture. And if you don't pay attention whether they are feeling comfortable or not. If they are getting along with each other or not, you are actually exposing them to negative environments and leaving them. This is something I think we need to talk more about."* (Selim, Male, Engineer, Germany, Engineer)

> *"People talk about diversity, they just want the appearance of; oh, we want 50-50 women and men, and we want equal cultures. Yet they ignore why things are the way they are."* (Nadiya, Female, Software Developer, UK)

Overall, the discussion of the success of diversity management initiatives and the extent to which they fulfil individual needs showed a dissatisfaction with DM practices. Participants repeatedly stated that before trying to build a more diverse workplace, organisations need first to be more inclusive and ensure equality of organisational structures. The above opinion was

shared by several interviewees, who stated that increasing diversity of employees is important, yet creating inclusive working cultures and organisational environments is critical issue, which is not being addressed enough by organizations. In short, organisational narratives on diversity priorities and management – as perceived by interviewees – predominantly focused on inclusion of underrepresented groups or almost exclusively on including more women, whereas their own needs were centred on career progression and perceived discrimination.

7.3.2 Diversity Practices: Truth or Myth?

> *"Right now, I don't know them specifically. Because when issuing the report, we will be working on that." (Zahra, Female, CSR Manager, Egypt)*

The second theme concerning diversity management is the ambiguity and vagueness surrounding it. As explained regarding the first theme, participants were aware of organisational commitment to increasing diversity based on leadership communication; however, most could not provide information about who was responsible for managing it (e.g. HR department, Diversity Team/Manager, or similar), whether any specific diversity goals had been formulated (e.g. gender balance achievements tied to compensation, official channels for complaints) or how diversity performance was reported (e.g. annual reports, intranet portals, online websites). In short, top management levels were associated with diversity commitment in relation to the majority of interviewees' awareness, which indicates a top-down communication of diversity's importance. However, awareness of actual diversity management responsibility was lacking at the employee level. The above interview statement was made by a female manager working on the diversity and inclusion section of her organisation's annual report. Whilst the interviewee was involved in and well informed about the organisation's CSR initiatives, her awareness and knowledge of its diversity priorities were limited. Upon asking an interviewee in Germany what the formal diversity management policies in his organisation were, the participant laughed and narrated that:

> *"…Well, there's always company codes of conduct and mottos, I vaguely remember that the previous one, or the one before that, or before that, I remember reading something about diversity. At the moment, I cannot even remember it [participant checks post it stuck to his laptop], exactly, I couldn't remember them, so I stuck them here. So, our values are integrity, empathy, it goes in the direction I guess… each*

> *opinion is to be respected is one sentence written, or we try to put ourselves into the shoes of the other. At some point diversity was explicitly mentioned. I had to sign a code of conduct that I will not discriminate against anyone."* (Tobias, Male, Engineer, Germany).

The limited knowledge of existing diversity management practices or the assumption that there were none, was a common phenomenon across the three research countries. For instance, one UK participant stated with certainty that having a gender balanced team is a formalised policy for upper management and then, whilst reflecting continued to narrate that, "*For the higher people yes, so I think it is formalised. And I, ok, this is my speculation…*" (Diego, Male, Technical Sales Manager, UK). Participants often hesitated in offering concrete information, as it was only while contemplating their responses that they seemed to realise their own uncertainty regarding that which they were providing. Similarly, a female engineer in the UK, when asked about where diversity management was anchored in her organisation (e.g. a person, a department, HR department, etc.) stated that: "*Not that I know of. Like I am pretty sure it must be someone's job in the world to keep track of this in some way*." (Nadiya, Female, Software Developer, UK). Since employees are the primary subjects who diversity management policies are intended to serve, the lack of knowledge about who is responsible for diversity management indicates that change is necessary. Individual uncertainties on how to 'make sense' of diversity management is a dynamic suggested by research on diversity management practices. That is, diversity management practices are shaped by contradictions: what counts as difference or diversity, are these at the individual level or group level, does it emphasise differences or sameness, and are the practices fuelled by the business case or social justice arguments (Holvino and Kamp, 2009). The lack of understanding or knowledge by employees might thus be a reflection of the incoherencies shaping diversity management as a field of practice. A study of practitioners' perceptions of diversity management showed that the diversity managers themselves perceived it as being challenging to execute (Schwabenland and Tomlinson, 2015). Indeed, as reflected in the opening interview excerpt above, policies at the individual level are often perceived in a fragmented fashion: a women's quota, an on-boarding training, an awareness day, etc. These practices – at least as manifested in individual perceptions of them – are not aligned to form a well-established managerial function, such as HR or accounting, which are perceived as such. Despite many diversity management policies

being anchored in human resources management practices and departments (e.g. recruitment and selection, equal compensation, promotions) (Daya, 2014; Janssens and Zanoni, 2014; Sabharwal, 2014), the interviewees did not associate diversity management with HR managers or departments. In fact, the only interviewee who could provide definite answers with regards to how diversity management is practiced, was a CEO level interviewee who, when asked how her organisation manages diversity, she stated that:

> *"It is communicated and we always do something around 6 March, the national women's day, and we talk about diversity. We try to talk about the broader sense not only male/female, that is one of the occasions and we are communicating these targets. We also have a specific report along with our annual report that is on sustainability, where we also report on the targets and where we are on this. So, it is something that is public and that is communicated." (Tina, Female, Director, Egypt)*

In most other cases, when interviewees did know about diversity management practices, they confirmed the lack of them. For example, an interviewee in Germany, when asked whether and how the organisation manages diversity explicitly stated that employees raised their concerns, but there was no formal diversity management: "*Honestly no, nothing of that kind unfortunately in our firm or in our, let's say, in our project. I don't know why, but we raised that*." (Paul, Male, Manager, Germany). Similarly, in Egypt, an interviewee stated that diversity was not explicitly mentioned in the working context as a topic: "*The idea of diversity as a subject, is never introduced to work. Maybe they apply it indirectly, but it is not something to be taught I guess*" (Reem, Female, HR Manager, Egypt). In another example, the interviewee was aware that diversity management was anchored in other organisational function and narrated that:

> *"…so, there is a wellness team on site, they help with this whole approach [diversity]. They have multiple incidents, like, they were offended by one of the team leaders, because of this and this and that. Or they are not feeling comfortable dealing with such a person, because of this and this and that*." (Mona, Female, Manager, Germany)

In short, despite organisations' reporting on their diversity and inclusion initiatives as well as the leadership's communication about it, its management of diversity was not evident to employees in its managerial processes and initiatives. As shown in section 7.2, all organisations, according to their websites or annual reports, have clear diversity priorities and

policies to manage these priorities. However, the majority of interviewees were oblivious to their existence. Along the same lines, the review of organisations' websites shows an extensive list of diversity dimensions. However, the participant statement below shows only limited diversity dimensions are actively promoted by organisations:

> *"I don't believe we do promote diversity. We certainly promote gender equality and we promote LGBT rights, but I don't think of those things as diversity, I think of them as just basic human rights. Diversity I don't think we promote; it just happens, It just seems to be there: ethnic, religious, cultural diversity. It is just there when you deal with different parts of the world."* (Ronald, Male, Sales Manager, UK)

The above statement clearly shows that there was awareness of what the organisation specifies as its diversity goals or targets. However, other aspects of diversity, such as ethnicity or culture were seen as being afterthoughts. The evident lack of awareness on formal diversity initiatives leads to the question as to whether diversity is managed informally. Diversity management literature heavily focuses on the following topics: training, performance feedback, recruitment, and mentoring. It is suggested that smaller and medium sized organisations tend to manage these aspects informally (Manoharan, Sardeshmukh and Gross, 2019). An analysis of formal diversity initiatives in hospitality and services organisations identified the following seven practices implemented by organisations named top for diversity by Diversity Inc.: (1) diversity training programmes, (2) supplier diversity, (3) a corporate diversity council, (4) employee networking and mentoring, (5) cultural awareness, (6) support for women and (7) support for LGBT (Madera, 2013). However, none of these formal or informal initiatives was acknowledged or known to interviewees in this research. Instead, commitment verbalised by leadership dominated their perceptions on diversity management. The interview quote below indicates that exclusion of ethnic minorities, and presumably many other dynamics of inequality, take place unconsciously. This shows that the passive approach to diversity, or in other words, only actively promoting equality for gender and LGBT as stated by the above participants, can lead to the exclusion of minority groups from the workplace.

> *"Well, we have one Arabic colleague, only one, and one Indian colleague. And other non-Germans are usually Eastern European. The ethnicities you typically find in Germany are Arabic, Turkish, Lebanese, we have almost none of them (…). It's not that*

management does not recognise the talents they have. Reflecting on our HR department, purely my own theory, I am speculating, they are all white. I would never say they are racist. I do not think they are, they are kind, intelligent and 'open to the world'. But I think it's the phenomenon which is always said about managers: we choose those who are similar to us." (Tobias, Male, Engineer, Germany)

To summarise, this theme, which concerns the ambiguity and vagueness surrounding diversity management implementation, draws attention to the tension between employee diversity management perceptions and organisational commitment, with the associated evidence revealing how employees lacked information and awareness on how the firm managed diversity. Participants' narratives on who was managing diversity and how were varied. Some clearly expressed that they did not know about diversity management, but that they assumed it was being undertaken. Some stated with certainty their organisations did not implement diversity initiatives. Finally, some interviewees stated that their organisation did not manage diversity formally. According to organisations' websites and annual reports however, diversity is adopted by the organisations as a concept inclusive of many dimensions, and organisations supposedly have many policies in place. Therefore, proper communication of diversity management and appropriate follow-up on diversity initiatives are crucial. The next subsection discusses the interviewees' perceptions of their organisation's commitment to diversity management. As such, it presents the third theme, which concerns employees' cynicism towards organisational diversity management narratives.

7.3.3 Diversity Management: Walk or Talk?

> *"Well, from a commercial very cynical perspective, we all know that they have to talk about diversity and address it in some way, more or less, depending on the company and the level of managers." (Sally, Female, Data Analyst, UK)*

The third and final theme refers to a cynical attitude and hence, general mistrust towards organisational practices and narratives. Respondents from all three countries repeatedly referred to the phenomenon of diversity and its management being 'talked' about, yet that actual implementation of policies was extremely limited. Employee centric diversity management policies are essential for employees to perceive their organizations as truly committed to valuing diversity (Otaye-Ebede, 2018). This is confirmed by the findings of this research, which show that the lack of diversity management practices influences individuals' perceptions of commitment to diversity as sincere. Despite the communication of diversity topics by leadership – which was discussed in depth in subsection 7.3.1 – participants often expressed the view that organisational efforts were insufficient or ineffective: *"So if it says anything at all it says that even if they do exist they are not doing a good job about it and I really believe that this topic is somehow, I would say that people do not pay that much attention to it here in Egypt especially"* (Taymour, Male, Engineer, Egypt). The majority of the research interviewees, did not recall whether equality, diversity and/or inclusion were officially communicated beyond leadership figures emphasising their importance in speeches or via electronic communication. Regarding which, interviewees stated that top management level – on several occasions – stated that the organisation was committed to increasing the representation of women, and that diversity and inclusion were key organisational values. Individuals hence perceived that diversity and inclusion were not an organizational priority in practice. As an even more cynical interviewee stated: *"they present numbers, and maybe they say that we need to increase the number of females in our teams if they have female applicants, but they don't stress the importance much."* (Shehab, Male, Engineer, Egypt). These statements exemplify many concerns reported by participants doubting the effectiveness of diversity management policies and their sincerity altogether. In addition to the cynicism shown above, interviewees also contended that diversity management was needed at a team or supervisor-employee level and in the 'day-to-day' organisational life, as opposed to there just being infrequent events:

> *"Every year we have this culture awareness day, where we are all asked to bring a dish from our countries. So, we had it in the room next door here actually. I think we should do this more often. Or I don't know, on the one hand it is good that the company is trying to do these programmes, but on the other hand, it should be your smaller teams, day-to-day." (Susan, Female, Manager, UK)*

In a study of UK universities' diversity management initiatives, it was suggested that the mere pledge of diversity as a core value, with the organisation issuing diversity and inclusion commitment statements, does not necessarily mean that resources are actually allocated to managing diversity (Ahmed, 2007). This suggestion holds true for this research, whereby the commitment to diversity was 'heard'; however, there was a lack of action perceived by employees. Not only did participants explicitly state their 'disbelief' in diversity 'talk', for they also referred to the inequality they experience at work. The statement below made by a software developer in Germany, indicates the frustration with regards to income inequalities based on gender and ethnic background. The participant indicates that women and people of colour earn significantly less than what they refer to as the industry's mainstream 'white men' who are already economically privileged.

> "*The mainstream, yeah…white male and then, comes from economically privileged backgrounds and also make a lot of money in their jobs. You also have the situation where you get hired in working in tech, but because you're, like, a woman or a person of colour, you're actually making significantly less.*" *(Dana, Non-binary, Software Developer, Germany)*

The abolishment of gender pay gaps is to date, accompanied with little success (Tissier-Desbordes and Visconti, 2019). Whilst gender pay gaps generally persist, intersectional pay gaps are an even more pressing problem. Research shows that for women who represent further minority groups, such as ethnicity and religion, face additional career obstacles including large pay gaps and restricted career progression (Tariq and Syed, 2018). A unidimensional understanding of diversity thus fails to remedy pay related discrimination (Woodhams, Lupton and Cowling, 2015). Paradoxically, interviewee perceptions confirm simultaneously that women in technology is the key focus of organisational diversity rhetoric, and that most inequality experiences were associated with being a woman in technology. For instance, one

interviewee narrated the challenges she faced as a woman in her career development: *"Religion never really mattered, but being male or female really mattered in many teams. For example, there were many teams I was very interested in joining and I would be told no we do not hire females in these teams, we only want males"* (Reem, Female, HR Manager, Egypt). In a similar vein, another participant explained that the focus on gender diversity was mainly in terms of numbers and ratios, not on creating a more women friendly workplace, which would attract more females: *"We were trying really hard to achieve the numbers, but they were not very achievable, especially at the senior level. We were concerned with numbers rather than with the actual support for females. We wanted to make sure that we achieved the ratios that we had to achieve for the group [Mother Company]" (Sabine, Female, HR Manager, Egypt).* These dynamics hence indicate the ineffectiveness of diversity management practices. To this extent, the effectiveness of diversity management initiatives is constantly under investigation, with little conclusive results (e.g. Bartels, Nadler, Kufahl, and Pyatt, 2013; Curtis and Dreachslin, 2008; Dobbin and Kalev, 2013; Jones, King, Nelson, Geller, and Bowes-Sperry, 2013; Nishii, 2017). The controversy surrounding the diversity discourse and the clash between the business case narrative and that of equality and social justice, means organisations are unable to transform the diversity narrative into inclusive managerial practices and interventions (Tatli, 2011). This phenomenon, in particular, is confirmed by this research, wherein the most focused on diversity dimension – gender – is still one of the most problematic aspects of diversity in the industry. For example, the interviewee below confirms that diversity is an internal slogan in the organisation which he closely relates to gender, yet he commented on the low representation of women in upper management:

> "*Well, diversity, it's a slogan which is quite loaded…those are the thoughts that immediately cross my mind. The percentage of women is naturally lower in engineering education. Out of the 14 quality engineers I oversee per project, there might be two women. With regards to women in leadership positions; in quality control we have a few women, but the situation is very different in product development. The situation is bad actually, we do not have a single woman in a leadership position in product development. We have one woman in a mid-management position and that's it.*" (Tobias, Male, Engineer, Germany)

The message that underrepresented groups 'need help' to progress, can backfire and lead to increased discrimination. That is, a mere focus on diversity goals (such as quotas) can lead to false diversity achievement, whereby numerical goals are met, but no inclusive culture is created (Leslie, 2019). Whilst the effectiveness of diversity initiatives is not the main focus of this theme, participants' cynicism about organisational commitment to diversity and inclusion, signals that if diversity initiatives are formally in place, their effects are not reaching employees. Wider contextual reasons can also contribute to the perception that organisational efforts are 'insincere'. In Germany and the UK, organisations are obliged by the EU to implement equality initiatives (Özbilgin and Tatli, 2011). In Egypt, a majority of participants stated that their organisations 'have to' fulfil certain diversity targets as per the regulations of their mother companies (which are predominantly European or American).

For example, an Egyptian interviewee confirmed that diversity was only about gender and only heard about during the hiring processes, narrating that: "*…diversity as a word in Egypt means you must have females in your team, that's it. You have 10 men in your team, then no, you must have two females, a checklist basically. We only hear the word diversity when hiring. So, the question is whether a female is joining the team and even if there are better male candidates, no, but she is the best amongst the girls (…) right now inequality happens against men, so men and women apply for a job, a man would be more than qualified, while the woman is not; she is really not. A couple friends of mine went through this, if both are applying for the same grade, they would give the woman a better grade, but not to the man" (Ezz, Male, Engineer, Egypt).*

The commitment to diversity was perceived as external to or imposed on the organisation and exclusively about increasing the percentage of women employees. The extent to which such externally motivated initiatives can effectively create inclusive workplaces depends on the degree to which this is translated at the sectoral level, which has been reported as limited, at least with regards to gender balance in male dominated professions (Caven, Astor and Diop, 2016). In short, the ineffectiveness of diversity initiatives can be rooted in multiple aspects relating to the profession, the national context, or the lack of organisational commitment. Moreover, the analysis has revealed that individual perceptions of diversity management initiatives were governed by a sense of mistrust and cynicism towards the organisation.

The cynicism towards diversity management was explored in-depth during the interviews. Participants were asked what they perceived as the appropriate first step towards a functioning diversity management programme or policies. A majority of interviewees stated that an assessment of the organisation's diversity was necessary to identify underrepresented and marginalised groups and to design relevant diversity policies. In particular, interviewees concluded that unless diversity policies are designed based on the organisation's context, these policies bear the risk of being irrelevant to the organisation:

> *"For me, to be honest, inclusion is a little bit difficult, because you need to first research to be able to know who you want to include specifically. Diversity is more or less by chance. You just don't say no to anybody and try to have as much diversity as you can but inclusion, you have to see who you need to be including. Therefore, you need to like research all of it in the organisation and you actively include these people in your organisation." (Anna, Female, Manager, Germany)*

The need to assess what organisations lacked in terms of diversity was shared by several interviewees in all three countries. Participants stated that, in order to manage diversity, organisations needed to understand, first, the inequalities that existed within their structures and to have an effective account of underrepresented groups. Finally, some interviewees stressed that unless this 'realistic picture' is available, diversity management would continue to be a 'tick box' exercise imposed by external powers, such as national legal systems or the group's headquarters. The above discussion shows the dissatisfaction of individuals with an organisational commitment to diversity and their cynicism regarding management's intentions. A general attitude of mistrust towards organisational diversity narratives was expressed, whereby individuals expressed doubts as whether it was more than 'talk', i.e. without any 'walk'. When asked what organisations could do in order to successfully manage diversity, some interviewees, as exemplified below, stated that a proper analysis of where the organization stands in terms of diversity of its employees is needed:

> *"Let's see what we have first in the company and let's define where we want to go. This is the first job you have. You should have in a department in this situation to assess: Do we have diversity already? Do we, which kind of diversity? Which percentage we have from foreigners? And so on and so on. When we have this we have to define where*

we want to go. That's actually the way I will tell the department to work. And if we have diversity and we see which measurements or which decisions we can take to get there." (Selim, Male, Engineer, Germany)

Other research participants highlighted the need to go beyond stating that diversity is important. The interview quote below by a UK female engineer summarises the cynical view on diversity management. The statement shows that despite women in technology being a topic widely discussed, yet there is little discussion around effectiveness diversity practices. Merely highlighting the importance of gender balance is thus insufficient as an approach to diversity management:

"It was all about how women are important, but there was nothing about what actions we were going to take. I think everyone there knew it was important, because I'd say about 90% of the audience, were women. We were talking about the importance of women in the workplace and so, I think everyone agreed with what was being said, but there was no action taken. And so, I think that's something that's very common across the tech industry. I've been to so many meetings and workshops and events about diversity and they all talk about how it's bad and how they need diversity, but there aren't really answers as to what is effective; what you can do to improve it." (Alia, Female, Software Designer, UK)

In sum, the industry diversity dynamics influence organisational diversity policies. The male domination of the tech industry has led to the prioritisation of gender. Moreover, the research findings have shown that gender fairness is prioritised only in theory and the interviewees perceived that very little, if any, appropriate actions had been taken. In addition, they reported that only a very limited number of diversity dimensions are considered beyond gender.

Common initiatives across them that employees were aware of are: women's quotas, disability quotas in Egypt, celebration of pride in Germany and the UK and maternity policies. In technology services companies, some participants also referred to mentoring and networking opportunities. All participants agreed that their organisations' top leadership explicitly communicated the importance of diversity through speeches or electronic mail, but that the commitment was 'talk but not walk'. They expressed the view that merely having quotas in

place was ineffective and often had negative repercussions and that the quotas were usually not achieved. Participants further indicated that they perceived the organisations' communicated commitment to diversity as disingenuous wherein efforts are directed towards creating more diverse but not more inclusive workspaces. Typically, diversity priorities (i.e. gender, age, etc.), were set by the mother company, with organisations designing and implementing specific initiatives and policies at the local level. However, interviewees were not aware who was responsible for implementing diversity policies; most organisations did not have a dedicated diversity and inclusion department or team at the local level. Instead, different approaches were adopted: a diversity manager within the HR team; a team composed of existing employees, who would design and implement a one year diversity management plan, or, as in most cases, interviewees were not informed of who was responsible for diversity management.

To conclude, the meso level analysis shows that there is a disconnect between employee perceptions and organisational ones with respect to diversity management. Moreover, the interviewees' lacked awareness of the diversity management in their respective organisations. The disconnect stems from the participants' perception of diversity management as being insufficient or non-existent, the organisational commitment being insincere and their needs being unfulfilled.

7.4 Summary and Conclusion: Meso Level Analysis

In this chapter, how the meso (organisational and sectoral contexts) level influences perceived diversity has been analysed. Accordingly, the focus has been on the managerial practices addressing diversity and inclusion. The findings have shown that, despite official organisational communication on diversity management, employees are not informed or aware of diversity management practices. Regarding which, employees confirmed that organisational leadership continuously communicates the organisation's commitment to diversity and inclusion. However, participants also confirmed a perceived lack of implementation of diversity policies. The findings have, thus, revealed that, whilst there is a diversity narrative that reaches employees, it remains mainly solely rhetoric, with little or no action being taken that individuals are aware of. The central role of gender diversity and the critically low representation of women in technology is a main theme in previous research and was echoed by participants of this study.

Employee perceptions of diversity management have been found to be a result of three processes: a perceived gap between organisational rhetoric and individual needs, lack of information on diversity management practices and a lack of trust towards organisational diversity espoused policy. These three processes result in three individual reactions towards diversity management. The unfulfilled individual needs lead to frustration, whilst the lack of information leads to incomprehension towards diversity practices. Finally, the lack of trust results in cynicism towards diversity management. In sum, individuals perceive organisational diversity commitment to be communicated for compliance purposes and hence, does not pertain to actual commitment to diversity and inclusion. Interestingly, these perceptions were shared by interviewees across the three countries included in the research, which in turn, highlights the role of the organisation for diversity management effectiveness.

Chapter 8

Identity: Identity Construction and Perceived Diversity

Introduction to Chapter

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the data relating to the second research objective and the respective set of research questions. The focus is on the processes of social and role identity construction, with the aim of uncovering the perceived diversity. The analysis identifies salient diversity aspects for the STEM employees interviewed in this research; referring to elements where individuals perceived similarity and differences to others. Prominent factors around identity construction are discussed. The chapter is structured in three sections: role identities, social identities and intersectionality. Overall, four identity elements are discussed: the central role of technology, gendered role identities, personality and mentality diversities as well as the intersectionality of diversity. The analysis presented in this chapter addresses the individual perception level, with the focus thus being on their views regarding their own identities as well as their perceived similarities and differences to others in their working environment.

8.1 Identity Construction and Diversity Perception

> *"Diversity is diversity. It is a mix of many issues; not only one issue. So, diversity is not about a certain issue only, and differs from one person to another." (Shehab, Male, Engineer, Egypt)*

The above quote represents an opinion shared by many participants and equally perceived by diversity scholars, who suggest that the essence of diversity lies with individual perceptions about differences and similarities to others (Van der Vegt and Van de Vliert, 2005; Thatcher, 2013; Shemla *et al.*, 2016). In this chapter, diversity perceptions at the individual level are analysed. That is, how interviewees construct their own identities in relation to others is explored. Therefore, it shows that the individual's sense of who they are influences their perceptions of diversity; of being similar to or different from others. Analysis of the data is theoretically anchored in social identity theory, role identity, and intersectionality. Perceived diversity was explored by applying the social and role identity theories from a relational perspective, which pertains to studying identity in the context it is embedded within. Social identity theory is adopted to account for salient diversity dimensions in a person's definition of their self-concept (Hogg, Terry and White, 1995). Role identities account for definitions of

the self that relate to a person's work (Brown, 2015). The relational approach allows for considering identity as a construct embedded in peoples communities, accounting for their cultural values and interpersonal and social relationships (Syed and Özbilgin, 2009). Therefore, the dynamics of how and why participants formed relationships at work were explored during the interviews.

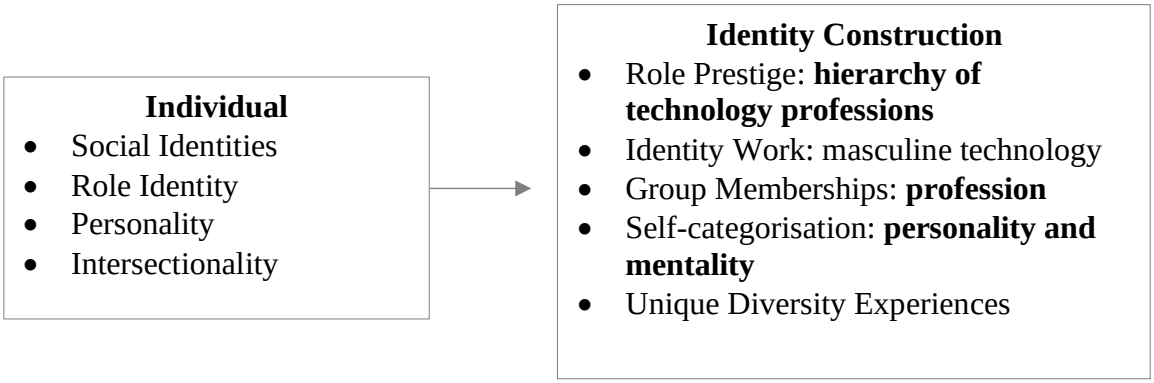
Identity is a self-construction, which carries nuances of differences or 'otherness', which links it to perceived diversity (Czarniawska, 2007; Holck, Muhr and Villesèche, 2016). In this chapter, perceived diversity, as mediated by the interviewees' construction of identity from two perspectives, namely, social and role identities is explored. Identity is, thus, considered as a construct embedded in the person's discrete context (Johns, 2006); their position in the team and interpersonal relationships at work, which in turn, is influenced by the specific industry dynamics. Role identities were explored in terms of why individuals chose to work in the industry, what aspects of their work were most significant to them, how they believed their roles shaped their identities and what challenges they faced with regards to career choices and progression. Social identities were explored in relation to the processes of socialisation and friendships at work, group dynamics, and categorisation of self and others. The focus of this chapter is, thus, on the individual (micro) level, which includes individuals' perceptions about themselves as whole identities and in relation to others they interact with in the workplace.

The data analysis revealed that technology, in particular, significantly influences individual diversity perceptions. This section contextualises the individual level of analysis by elaborating upon the nature of interviewees' teams and functional hierarchies. Interviewees included individuals with both technical and non-technical educational and professional backgrounds. The technical roles included: software engineers, telecommunication engineers, mathematicians, data analysts, user design experts, technical sales experts and information technology engineers. Non-technical roles included: human resources managers, customer services managers, training experts, operations managers, business development managers, marketing managers, corporate social responsibility managers and senior account managers. The power hierarchies in the industry rank technical individuals and departments above managerial ones, with some functions, such as technical sales or pre-sales, ranking between the two. The technical sales department acts as a mediator between sales departments and clients,

thereby ensuring that sales can be achieved from a technological perspective. Within the technical functions, those involved in the design of technology perceived themselves as being more 'sophisticated' and 'innovative' or 'creative' than functions that work 'just on building technology', thus generally deeming themselves more important. Individuals working on building software, however, seemed oblivious to this dynamic and perceived themselves as equal, yet different, from others. A strong differentiation between technical and managerial roles was observed. That is, managerial functions were perceived as less important than technical ones; technology being the core product, employees holding managerial positions were perceived to exist in order to support those holding technical ones. Hence, managers were perceived to exist to accommodate and 'care for' engineers. The managerial-technological power gap is closely linked to gender dynamics. The industry gender gap has been partly addressed by hiring more women for managerial functions (due to a claimed lack of women with STEM backgrounds). Consequently, the majority of managers/women were in functions perceived as having the aim of accommodating engineers/men. These power dynamics and how they mediate perceived diversity are discussed in-depth throughout the chapter.

Four key identity related themes emerged through data analysis, with the first two centring on technology which acted as an element differentiating professional roles and contributes to gender dynamics in the industry based on its perception as masculine. To that, the masculinity of technology creates gender dynamics unique to the industry. The third theme refers to the significance of personality as an invisible diversity dimension. Finally, the individual and contextual nature of intersectionality is discussed; showcasing the stories of four women interviewees. Figure 7 summarises the findings of the micro level analysis. Social identities refer to aspects, such as gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, or religion, whilst role identity pertains to a person's work role. Personality refers to a set of characteristics of an individual, such as their communication style, their sense of humour and the nature of their interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, analysis revealed that diversity perceptions resulting from identity work is manifested in individual's perception of the attractiveness of their professional role, their group memberships, self-categorisation processes and their unique experience of diversity.

Figure 7: Identity Construction and Diversity Perceptions



Source: Maatwk, 2020

8.1.1 Technology Power Dynamics and Hierarchies

> *"When talking about telecom operators, it is completely different. It is kind of an edge, if you are an engineer. Some of them are snobs because they are engineers and they are segmented." (Dunia, Female, Engineer, Egypt)*

The role of technology in identity construction is multi-fold. Firstly, technology was a key element in constructing professional identities. To that, individuals differentiated between technology related and non-technology related roles. Secondly, the specific nature of the role (design or building of technology) creates a power dynamic on side of designers, who perceive their role as being more 'sophisticated and important' than other engineers. Finally, individuals with managerial roles and backgrounds also identified with technology, with their identification with it stemming from the value it brings to society and business. Technology further influenced identity construction of participants not working in technology related roles. Herein, many respondents holding managerial roles stated that advancement in technology positively contributes to society, and thus strongly influences their sense of belongingness to the industry. The statement below by a telecoms engineer is illustrative of the majority of individuals with a technical background and showcases the attachment to technology. The statement also shows the differentiation between IT and ICT roles, thus indicating how as an identity dimension, technology orientation is multifaceted.

> *"…honestly, I am a strictly technical person. I like working in the tech field, even for instance when I got the opportunities for project management and similar things, they were not interesting for me. Maybe I am thinking changing the technology itself, maybe I would shift from telecommunications a bit to IT." (Taymour, Male, Engineer, Egypt)*

The cognitive identity work undertaken here shows how the individual uses the perspective of considering technology (designing vs. building technology) as a way of differentiating his own role from that of another person (Caza, Vough and Puranik, 2018). Interest in technology and a fascination with the fast pace of the industry in terms of its technological advancements were evident in most interviews. Most participants stated that what excited them most about working in the industry is their sense of significantly contributing to the development of the world. The information-processing or decision-making approach to diversity addresses team diversity in terms of education and previous work experience (Van Knippenberg, De Dreu and Homan, 2004; Zellmer-Bruhn *et al.*, 2008), with both aspects being key elements of identity and perceived diversity. Social identity theory stipulates that diversity dimensions are the basis for individual definitions of the self-concept (Hogg, Terry and White, 1995) in relation to collective groups (Ashforth, Harrison and Corley, 2008). Technology is, thus, a diversity dimension that shapes identity and perceptions of differences in the industry. The role of technology was also perceived by individuals in managerial roles, as shown in these interviewee statements:

> *"…the stereotype of telecoms people is male between 30 and 40 years. Smart, they always say they are smart, whatever it means, but they are smart. They are, like, really interested in innovations from different industries as well, because they think they can learn from it." (Stephanie, Female, Director, Germany)*

> *"They are engineers and they are very academic people, very rational people, they're not into jumping, having fun, and colours and games." (Zahra, Female, CSR Manager, Egypt)*

As exemplified above, technical role identities can be negatively perceived by individuals with non-technical ones, where they are perceived to not be 'fun' or to 'think they are so smart'. The perception of differences between engineers and non-engineers indicates a power dynamic

that hierarchically puts engineers in a higher position than non-engineers. Thus, technology is used as a means to create a favourable social identity (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) and the social distinction and value attributed to the group identity of technical professionals is a basis for creating in-groups and out-groups or an us-vs-them dynamic (Triandis and Trafimow, 2003; Roberts and Creary, 2013). Often, the favouring of individuals with a technology background caused a dynamics of exclusion towards non-technology background individuals. Some interviewees reported that colleagues were often uncooperative during times of crisis and when problem-solving. For example, one female Egyptian manager stated that: "*Because I came from a real estate background, I am not a telecoms person, that was another challenge. You are not from our family, so you will not understand, you cannot relate."* (Noha, Female, Operations Manager, Egyp). Besides the role of technology in differentiating between technical and managerial roles, a further differentiation between technical roles was revealed. Herein, technical roles were divided into those perceived more important (such as design), and less important (such as software development and hardware building). The statement below by a UX specialist reiterates this power dynamic at the departmental level. The respondent confirmed that his team was often perceived to not have any 'real' work. The interviewee elaborated that this perception related to the creativity of their tasks, which brought the team some privileges in terms of decision-making freedom, which was not the case for most other departments.

> *"I think we are a bit different to other teams. We do innovation, which means we need that feeling, we do our own thing, but then other teams that are more product specific, develop products and these products go to market. I would assume it is much stricter. We feel sometimes we have to not appear as the special ones, who do their own thing. And it is a weird position, because we need to show that we can deliver value, especially because we are different. We don't want these other teams to look at us and be like "you guys! You don't do any actual work" (David, Male, Software Designer, UK).*

These observations corroborate what the literature proposes concerning the dynamics of elitism in the industry. Marks and Scholarios (2007) suggest that design engineers, based on their high educational attainment, are perceived as an elite when compared to other technical and non-technical roles in electronics companies. This perception of elitism is rooted in certain job privileges, including: creative freedom, technical autonomy and discretion (Andrews, Lair and

Landry, 2004). This conforms with repeated statements by participants that they valued the prestigious aspects of their work, those relating to cognitive abilities and visibility. Thus, technology is not, per se, the basis for differentiation, but rather, the skills and prestige associated with it.

> *"…This is something that kind of excites me for the future or otherwise a company where I can [use] deeper analytical skills, where I can go to look more about Big Data and leverage Big Data. Oh my God, a big party." (Mike, Male, Data Scientist, UK).*

> *"What I like most is the problems you get to solve. The visibility, so, like my work on the company's websites and applications is visible to millions of people, I can very easily show you something now and tell you that's me I did that part." (Adam, Male, Software Engineer, UK).*

Technology is, hence, not only a basis for categorisation processes, for it is also perceived as an essential diversity dimension. Whilst participants repeatedly agreed that diversity was about demographical aspects, such as age, ethnicity or gender, in some cases, their professional roles in their working contexts were deemed as being more salient in this respect. Perceived diversity relates to both perceived subgroup splits (Shemla *et al.*, 2016), which in this case was the distinct nature of technology oriented roles and managerial roles as well as the individual level perceptions of being different to others (Hobman, Bordia and Gallois, 2004; Shemla *et al.*, 2016), This encompassed individual perceptions of different skills and cognitive tasks. Some participants, for example, stated that managers were usually more skilled in behavioural aspects, such as communication and listening, whilst engineers were more practical and problem-solving oriented. The differentiation between the managerial and technical roles was stronger than both that for different technical roles or different managerial roles. The most significant managerial differentiation or labelling concerned sales functions.

> *"Diversity could actually mean two things. That we have people from different ethnicities and countries. It could mean for me multidisciplinary, for example, as I am working in developing mobile applications for online banking, they [colleagues] are not only working with software developers, but I have people whose domain is different: banking, marketing and sales. That would also mean diversity to me." (Hannah, Female, Software Developer, Germany)*

Participants, when discussing the perceived differences between engineers and non-engineers, repeatedly referred to sales teams, which is the only managerial function they perceived to have a strong 'typical employee' stereotype. Regarding which, individuals associated the sales function with having good communication skills, being a *'people's person'* and being money oriented. Engineers, on the other hand, were reported as being motivated by an interest in technological advancements and having poor communication skills.

> *"I work in the sales department, which in my point of view will be really different from the development department. The stereotype will be someone quite extroverted, really easy going to speak with people, that would be potentially the stereotype, but it is not a strong stereotype." (Mike, Male, Data Scientist, UK)*

> *"So, one thing common about them is that they are sales [people] and they love money. This is I am sure of." (Zain, Male, Sales Director, Egypt)*

Further discussing perceived similarities and differences, the statement below demonstrates how differences in identities can be noticed through verbal communication styles or 'jargon'. The observation was aggregated to a group level, thereby indicating a perception of differences at the functional group level: *"…everyone's different, I mean, engineers would use a lot of jargon in their conversations. Business people would use different jargon. Marketing people would use different ones. So, I can't say there's like a typical person* here." (Adam, Male, Engineer, UK). As such, functional diversity is strongly perceived in the industry and can be considered a key diversity dimension. Whilst research has suggested that deep level diversity is more significant than visible functional diversity (Pinjani and Palvia, 2013), the results here indicate that the latter –is adopted as a cue for further deeper level diversity, which in turn, creates a power gap between engineers and non-engineers. Functional diversity is thus a key dimension in the identity construction process. On the one hand, it is – in itself – a dimension of self-identification, and additionally, it is adopted for differentiation between the self and others.

> *"…the employees in technology have different thinking than marketing and sales, even this is diversity; and the technology between the teams, each team has different ways of thinking." (Emad, Male, Engineer, Egypt)*

> "*So, I see things from a designer's perspective, like how do we make sure we build things that are important to people? And I think we have too few of the people thinking about these questions." (David, Male, Software Designer, UK).*

Diversity in functional roles or perspective on technology, is thus linked to cognitive diversity, which refers to perceived differences with regards to skills, thinking styles, knowledge, beliefs and values (Shin *et al.*, 2012). This is in line with literature suggesting that individuals' role or professional identities are constructed based on a mix of the individual's striving and aspirations as well as prescriptions and labelling processes by others (Ybema *et al.*, 2009). The above statements show how the participants constructed their own role technical identities in relation to others. For instance, in the second statement, the interviewee mentions the uniqueness of his work, and that 'too few people' have the same perspective. Thus, highlighting the distinction of his identity (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) and the emotional value of belonging to a socially distinct group (Cornelissen, Haslam and Balmer, 2007).

Hence, the significance of role identities becomes evident through the degree to which individuals' rhetoric are centred on their professional roles. The direct self-identification with technology and its central role in identity construction indicate the significance of role identities. Individuals' incorporation of meanings associated with their professional role (Stets and Burke, 2000), in this case the sophistication of their technological contributions, shapes their motives and values (Slay and Smith, 2011). Since role identities are usually earned, rather than given (López-Facal and Jiménez-Aleixandre, 2009), the sense of uniqueness and distinction of employees with technology role identities is heightened. To conclude, both the construction of identity and perceived diversity are shaped by technology. The individual's role and relationship to technology can cause her/him to be perceived as an elite in the industry, or merely as a support to the elite functions and thus, less important. Finally, the technology orientation has created a complex gender dynamic, as discussed in the next subsection.

8.1.2 Masculine Technology and Gendered Role Identities

"So much of your day is managing male egos." (Alia, Female, Software Designer, UK)

Gender is a common theme across all topics integrated in this research: identity, diversity and culture. Gendered perception with regards to technology and role identities was a prevalent theme in interviews with both female and male participants. The data analysis revealed that technology-oriented roles are overwhelmingly occupied by males and the perceived role of women – who mainly occupy managerial positions – is to support men in their work. Hence, there is a clear hierarchy positioning engineers (men) higher than managers (women). The gender dynamic was described in terms of several aspects. A pattern of women being associated with what is perceived as 'softer' roles in the industry emerged, these being, for example: human resources, marketing or corporate social responsibility. Additionally, several male interviewees repeatedly referred to female colleagues as 'girls' instead of women, which highlights how women are perceived as fragile or delicate. Furthermore, men often stated that women needed to be handled with care and be sheltered from the tough working environment of technology. Moreover, it was argued that they should stay in 'offices with air conditioning' and not go to engineering sites. Engineering roles, in general, were frequently deemed too demanding for women, for example, in terms of working hours and how these clash with other commitments they have towards their families or other social gender roles. Finally, women often felt that they were hired reluctantly or that they had to prove themselves 'technologically' fit to do the job by showing an 'amazing track record' career wise. Hence, women and men's role identities, their capabilities and suitability for the industry were perceived differently, with the latter having greater power and higher status than the former. These perceptions were anchored in three factors: the low representation of women in the industry, the clashing the masculinity of technology and femininity of women as well as the perception of women as ideal managers, as discussed in the next subsection.

Masculine Technology and Feminine Women: Incompatible?

> *"The female colleagues were around I would assume 10 to 15 out of 4,000" (Hannah, Female, Software Developer).*

The first issue reported by most interviewees was the low representation of women compared to men, which led to women 'sticking out' in the workplace. Many females stated that they were often the only woman in the room or at a meeting; which was usually their first utterance on diversity. Male interviewees also repeatedly stated that gender was a diversity priority for their organisations. However, the reason behind the low number of women was repeatedly attributed to their not wishing to be engineers or to work in STEM subjects.

> *"I'm not exactly [sure]; three out of four teams will have at least one girl." (Faris, Male, Software Developer, UK)*

> *"From a gender perspective, it is not really diverse, because in my team of 50 employees, at the beginning I was the only woman in that department, now I have two women hired" (Stephanie, Female, Director, Germany)*

When addressing gender imbalance in the workplace, one reason discussed by many participants was the low representation of women in technology-related education. For example, a male engineer in the UK stated that: "*I mean it's a problem; it starts much earlier than the workplace, actually. It starts from university and schooling. So, if you take, like, the ratio of males to females on engineering majors at universities, it's actually, like, similar to the ratio we have at the workplace." (Adam, Male, Software Developer, UK).* However, some participants observed that in Egypt, more women study STEM related majors than men. This is in line with recent research suggesting that in countries with higher gender inequality, the desire for higher life quality can promote female engagement with STEM education (Stoet and Geary, 2018). Additionally, many Egyptian research respondents discussed the cultural perception of only medicine and engineering to be socially acceptable career choices as well as how this influences their choice of technology related education, for both males and females.

The perception of technology work and education being unsuitable for women is anchored in the different perceptions of men and woman as engineers or STEM employees. The low representation of women in technical departments and roles was mostly attributed to the nature

of technical work and the working conditions. These perceptions were, however, mostly those of men and most bluntly in Egypt, for in the UK and Germany, the views on women were more nuanced, as discussed in chapter 6 on the contextual experience of gender:

> *"No, in engineering we don't need more women, because sometimes we work at night until dawn. Sometimes, we have to work in the field, we travel a lot, so if a woman can handle this it will be okay, but I don't think many women want to handle this kind of work." (Shehab, Male, Engineer, Egypt)*

> *"But there are two types of IT, the field in which you do the service while sitting at the desk and some other services, where you have to make some hardware installations; females tend to avoid the hardware installations. It's not about whether a female is able to carry something or so. You will have to visit sites where it's not possible for an Egyptian girl to go to; they feel it's a bit unsafe, and I fully support this statement, we are not yet that much prepared for females running site surveys." (Youssef, Male, Engineer, Egypt)*

The different perceptions of men and women have several implications. Firstly, gender is a key diversity dimension in STEM; emphasised through the contrasting perceptions attached to each. Secondly, the masculinity of technology, coupled with the perception of women, by men, as less competent in technology, creates a hierarchy. Thirdly, identity works processes significantly differ between men and women. While men focus on the uniqueness and distinction of their role identities, women have to deal with identity threat, as their group is negatively perceived. Previous research has suggested that engineering is considered one of the most male-dominated professions (Hatmaker, 2013), which reinforces the perception that it is an unsuitable career for women (Powell, Bagilhole and Dainty, 2009). Many of the interviewed male engineers confirmed this perception, whilst women engineers disagreed, yet confirm receiving this 'vibe' from male colleagues. It has been argued that, to deal with the masculinity of engineering identities, women distance themselves either from the technical nature of their work, or from their female identities (Adam *et al.*, 2006). While social identity theory proposes that individuals identify with favourable groups (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), women respond differently to the negative stereotypes they are challenged with. In diverse work contexts, such an identity threat is coped with through group memberships and

identification (Roberts and Creary, 2013). However, according to women interviewees' statements, no particular groups existed and they usually navigated the challenges on their own. This is in line with research suggesting that women undo their gender when they 'do' their engineering roles, thereby sustaining the status quo of a female hostile work environment (Powell, Bagilhole and Dainty, 2009). Nonetheless, some exceptions to this research can be detected. For example, on Egyptian engineer, reflecting on her femininity stated that "*…men all the time say about the female engineers they are men like them. No, I must prove that I am not. That is why you will see that on working days I am wearing high heels. The males say to me 'we feel sorry for you, you must feel tired', but I am not tired at all, I am very happy, I am feeling feminine."* (Yasmine, Female, Engineer, Egypt). The notion that women are deemed unfeminine, if they excel at work roles typically associated with masculinity has been discussed in the literature for the last two decades. In such scenarios, women are often perceived as flawed females or honorary men (Etzkowitz, Kemelgor and Uzzi, 2003). A double edged sword presents itself to women, who are deemed unfeminine, if they are firm and efficient, whilst they are labelled incompetent, if they show qualities considered feminine, such as sensitivity or caring (Evetts, 1997). Thus, constructing their identities as engineers, women have to distance themselves from favourable identities of 'feminine women' or 'competent engineers'. In complete contrast, men benefit from the distinction of their masculinity and technology identities. The details of identity navigation for women are usually embedded in subtle daily workplace dynamics, with visible and invisible aspects, for instance, communication, clothing and humour. Illustrating this, a female Engineer based in the UK described aspects she needed to navigate in her interactions with male colleagues stating that:

> *"So, much of your day is figuring out what exactly to say, so it doesn't sound like crazy women, like you're putting them off. It sounds nice, but not too nice, because you don't want them to think that you're being too friendly, or too interested, which is a problem too for some guys, and so you have to use that tone. Then, the way that you're dressed, and the way you come across is all like managing their perspective. It's exhausting." (Alia, Female, Software Designer, UK).*

In line with the above statement, research suggests that in male dominated working environments, women are restricted by a 'sexualized visibility', such that sexual attributes overshadow others and dictate the appropriateness of women's self-presentation (Fernando,

Cohen and Duberley, 2018).Under a social categorisation lens, individuals are depersonalised and perceived as an embodiment of the group they represent (Hogg and Terry, 2000). Since women are stereotyped either as incomplete engineers, due to a lack of masculinity or as unfeminine women, if they are masculine enough for engineering work, they distance themselves from both groups they represent, namely, engineers and females.

Adding to the complexity of masculinity of the industry, the perception of women as managers creates an additional challenging dynamic. The majority of participants stated that their organisations attempted to achieve gender balance and considered it a diversity priority. Yet, women continue to leave technology related industries, such as the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) industry (Griffiths and Moore, 2010). Efforts on improving gender balance have mainly targeted recruitment policies and resources (Evans, 2012). However, the data analysis revealed that most women were hired for non-technical positions. A human resources manager in Egypt stated that the problem with recruiting women engineers is twofold: the low number of female engineering graduates and the resistance of the line managers, who are usually involved in the selection process. She said that, *"…not a lot of females graduate as engineers and even when they do, management would be a bit resistant, unless they are very good and they have an amazing track record, then they would consider taking them". (Sabine, Female, HR Manager, Egypt).* Since technology related functions were perceived as too challenging for women and it was claimed that not enough women graduate from STEM education, a trend of employing predominantly women for managerial roles emerged throughout the data. The quotes below show how women were overly associated with managerial roles.

> *"…in sales, in marketing, in call centres, in human resources, we have many women, but in the technical part it is much more men." (Tamer, Male, Engineer, Egypt)*
>
> *"So, it depends on, like, the type of work. So, in tech, in the tech sector, it's mainly dominated by males. For marketing and business and sales sectors, like there's, I would say there are more females than males there." (Adam, Male, Software Developer, UK)*
>
> *"…you know how people perceive it, because some males could say, 'ah there is already diversity, there is one lady working in the HR.'" (Hannah, Female, Software Developer, Germany)*

These discussions resonate with previous research suggesting that, on the one hand, there is a low presentation of women in the sector and on the other, that when presented, women primarily occupy non or low technical functions (Guerrier *et al.*, 2009). Hence, women are underrepresented in upper management levels yet equally represented to men in the overall workforce, the challenge for women is thus more about climbing the career ladder upwards than being employed (Heilman, 2012; Bono *et al.*, 2017). Scholars have suggested that women are associated with roles that require client experience and 'soft' skills, such as outsourcing and consulting (Grugulis and Vincent, 2009). In addition, the industry's working conditions are considered to influence hiring of women: long working hours and the obligation to stay updated in terms of technology despite gaps in employment (Glover and Guerrier, 2010). Two dynamics result from the trend of hiring women for managerial roles. The reinforcement of the stereotype that women are unfit for technology and engineering functions and the perception of women as being better managers than men. The two following quotes indicate how the perception of women as competent managers, is negatively connotated, as it primarily means supporting men. Secondly, a form of 'covered sexism' is detected where men state their surprise at women being smart enough to handle complex technical tasks.

> *"…we have many women working functions like a team admin manager, which is basically someone who deals with the needs of the team members. If I need to travel somewhere or book something, I call her." (Taymour, Male, Engineer, Egypt)*

> *"But somehow they managed to find three women who all are really good. I don't know how they found these women, because I know it is really fucking hard to find people who are diverse in a wider sense and also capable and also want to work for us." (David, Male, Software Designer, UK)*

The 'female managers' phenomenon comes in contradiction to the literature on ideal manager stereotypes. Most notably, it contradicts the Think Manager-Think Male phenomenon, where stereotypes of competent managers are associated mainly with male stereotypes, thereby deeming women less competent in this role (Schein, 1984). Female managers are, thus, expected to match male manager stereotypes, which generally dominate over their stereotypes (Gmür, 2006). Similarly, a recent study on discourses on male and female CEOs suggested that the former are perceived as innately competent leaders (Katila and Eriksson, 2013). Competent

managers are historically perceived to be male, not female. However, the findings of this research suggest the opposite, as women's managerial competency is praised; however, women are predominantly 'celebrated' as managers, because they are perceived as less competent engineers than men. Not only is the notion of 'competent female managers' a reinforcement of the 'incompetent female engineers' notion, for it also automatically creates a power hierarchy, which ranks women lower than men and attributes to them a role to support/serve men.

In conclusion, gender diversity is a key challenge in the industry and is closely linked to the perception of technology as masculine. Women are perceived as incompetent engineers, with those perceived as being competent a rare exception. The masculinity of technology contributes to this complex dynamic. At the core of the gender dynamics lies the perceived difference between women and men with regards to their technological competence. This perceived difference results in different identity navigation strategies. Men draw themselves closer to their engineering identities, which indirectly draws them nearer to their masculinity. Women generally distance themselves from their femininity in order to put their engineering identities in a favourable light. Hence, the influence of the individual's professional context and identity on their diversity perceptions and experiences is highlighted. Both the technology industry, as well as the professional role (technology or management) interplay with gender, and thereby shape diversity related dynamics and individual diversity perceptions. The next section identifies an invisible form of diversity discussed by participants; namely, diversity of personality and mentality.

8.2 Sensing Invisibilities: *'Diversity of Thought'*

> *"…I would like to actually say that we have similar ideologies, and how we think about different issues, like when I come to talk about one of my struggles, that others would connect with me, and see it as a struggle." (Sabine, Female, HR Manager, Egypt)*

Whilst technology and gender were two predominantly visible diversity dimensions, which significantly influenced identity and perceived diversity, diversity of personalities and mentalities is an invisible diversity dimension that was addressed by almost all the participants. The discussion with them covered the following aspects: friendships and socialisation with colleagues inside and outside of work, group formations and relationships, stereotypes relating to the organisation, industry or employee groups as well as minority-majority groups and relationships. The aim of the discussion was to explore how individuals bond with other and what aspects make them feel closer, similar to and/or different from others. That is, the purpose was investigating deeper levels of perceived diversity, beyond surface level dimensions.

Diversity Perceptions: Personality and Mentality

Perceived diversity at an individual level was constantly stated to be less about demographic (and visible) diversity, but rather, about personalities, mentalities or ideologies. Interviewees stressed that visible aspects, such as age, ethnicity or class constitute diversity, were less significant than invisible diversity, in particular, thinking styles and personalities. They often used expressions, such as *'different mentalities or mindsets', 'different personalities', 'similar ambitions', 'diversity of thoughts', 'same ideologies'* and *'diversity of horizons'*. Hence, this theme on personality explores perceived deep level diversity in terms of mentalities and personalities, and shows how individuals identify and self-categorise based on these constructs. Three sub-themes form this theme: meaning and significance of mentality and personality, invisibility of personality and its influence on group dynamics. The significance of personality as an invisible diversity dimension stems from its impact on social interactions and relationships in the workplace.

Significance of the Invisible: Diversity of Personalities.

> *"They have the same way of thinking, as I told you, we speak the very same language we have a little bit of differences and interests, yet we understand each other…she is having the same brain in her like me; she likes images, and creativity." (Zahra, Female, CSR Manager, Egypt)*

The data revealed that individuals categorised others based on the extent to which their mentalities or personalities differed to their own. These two aspects were constructed in terms of aspects of dissimilarities. For example, ***mentalities*** were often related to a person's *standard of living*, referring to their *socioeconomic status*, *lifestyle choices*, *political ideologies*, *adherence to social norms and rules*, and finally, *class*. ***Personalities***, on the other hand, were associated with a person's *communication style* (formal versus informal), their *sense of humour* and their *openness or socialisation preferences*; referring to a sense of friendliness or warmth towards others. Additionally, participants stated several other forms of invisible diversity, such as being introverted versus extroverted, focusing on the task versus focusing on people at work, as well as mental health issues. Such aspects were then related to a person's 'way of thinking' or mentality. For example, individuals' skills emphasizing relationships versus tasks was related to their 'thinking styles'.

> *"They are diverse not in terms of demography, but in terms of thinking styles. Maybe this matters more rather than demographical diversity. They are diverse in terms of thinking, mostly engineers, but they were different in their lifestyle, social lives. Some of them are more introverts, it is quite apparent, they are keener on the task and interact less with people, they are not people "people", other members are extroverts, very much into extracurricular activities, like volunteering, charity, cycling." (Jamil, Male, Engineer, Egypt)*

These interpretations of a person's 'way of thinking' illustrate how it is perceived and understood as a diversity dimension. Similarity and difference of mentalities were frequently related to other more visible diversity dimensions, often of a demographic nature, such as age, educational background and social class. Communication was addressed as one of the aspects

that often caused conflict or misunderstanding, particularly because individuals had different styles of communication. The two most discussed differences with regards to communication styles, were the degree of formality individuals preferred when communicating with each other and the comfort or discomfort of communication (e.g. extroversion and introversion). Respondents referred to individuals' preferences regarding formal written or verbal communication, such as meetings and emails, as opposed to informal communication 'joking in the corridors', or 'over coffee or a cigarette'.

> *"…collectively identifying where we are in terms of personalities, in some ways it's bad, because being able to put someone else in a box, and say: right, that is who you are, so now I know how to get to you, which on the one hand, is kind of a bad thing to do, but on the other hand, it gives you a structure to be able to think about somebody else." (Alia, Female, Software Developer, UK)*

The above quote describes how labelling one another with personality traits can be viewed negatively, yet helpful for interactions at work. On dealing with different personalities, a few participants stated that the awareness of each other's personalities and of how they differed was a key factor for dealing with the differences and avoiding conflict: *"…it is not that they are annoying they just don't get you and you don't get them" (Sally, Female, Data Scientist, UK)* The diversity of thoughts or horizons, as discussed by the participants, can be considered an umbrella term for several aspects that relate to cognitive diversity and individual differences. For example, the below two statements were given by interviewees when they were asked to elaborate what they referred to as 'personality' or 'mentality' and they referred to aspects such as communication, both verbal and in written:

> *"…the very talkative and the very good communication skills, and the other one is very uptight, and how when one of them meant something the other one understood in a completely different way, and they would fight, and I would have to get in between." (Sabine, Female, HR Manager, Egypt)*

> *"And that's the thing they were saying the other day like 'the nice people who use a lot of emojis', but other people will think oh you are not professional, which is so annoying to me. I hate this because I sometimes use emojis, like I am a human being." (Sally, Female, Data Scientist, UK)*

In addition, the following statement suggests that salaries and family commitments elicit group formation:

> *"Sometimes I feel like salaries make a difference, so that people and groups of the same salary group meet. Let me think, different ideas of life, so, for example, if you have a family and you are a father around 40 years or something, then you can build another group within the group." (Stephanie, Female, Director, Germany)*

Additionally, the extent to which individuals were comfortable with social interactions and communication was perceived as diversity: *"Maybe you're a bit closed off, and we're really sociable, but you are, like, extremely introverted, maybe you find it hard to talk. Maybe you stutter a lot, like, it is, like, maybe outwardly you are extremely different in a way that makes it hard to deal on a social level, but we [the organisation] don't care" (Nadiya, Female, Engineer, UK)*. Additionally, the following quote illustrates how 'diversity of thought' relates to gender, ethnicity and cultural/national origins: *"But when I think about diversity it's about gender, but also ethnic diversity, diversity in the background as well so where you come from, how you've come to be where you are. It's actually diversity of thought that's where I'm leading to." (Alia, Female, Software Designer, UK)*. From a social identity perspective, these perceived diversity dimensions relate to who a person is (Brown, 2015). However, social identity theory traditionally addresses diversity dimensions, such as age, gender, sexual orientation, as well as group formation and stereotyping processes (e.g. Jackson, May and Whitney, 1995; Ellmers and Haslam, 2012; Ormiston, 2015; Bonache, Langinier and Zárraga-Oberty, 2016). Personality and mentality diversity can, thus, be considered a further diversity dimension that shapes social identity and group dynamics. The significance of this perceived diversity lies in its definition and visibility. Personality, mentality and ways of thinking were constructed as, albeit close, slightly different constructs for each individual.

Overall, participants related personality to communication, socialisation, humour, extroversion/introversion, and lifestyle. Personality, hence, means a range of intangible elements. Addressing the visibility of diversity dimensions, research outcomes have suggested that surface level diversity leads to perceived deep level diversity (Williams and O'reilly, 1998; Cunningham, 2007; Rico *et al.*, 2007). Conventionally, scholars referred to underlying or deep

level diversity in terms of skills, knowledge, industrial background (Milliken and Martins, 1996); sexual orientation, religion, income or tenure (Qin, Muenjohn and Chhetri, 2014). However, participants in the current study referred to a different type of deep level diversity, one that is more difficult to measure and yet, stated as having an impact on workplace relationships. Corresponding to the personality diversity explored here, Guillaume, Brodbeck and Riketta (2012), suggest that deep level diversity is about attitudes, beliefs, personality and values. Their findings indicate that these deep level dissimilarities negatively impact on social integration, especially with high interdependence teams. Participants repeatedly stated that perceiving similar personality and thinking styles was a key reason they formed close relationships to others, which is in line with Guillaume *et al.*'s (2012) finding. Moreover, participants stressed that perceiving differences in personality and mentality did not negatively influence the working relationships, but rather, tended to lead to more formal relationships.

To conclude, perceived deep level diversity influences social integration at work. Extending prior research exploring deep level diversity in terms of knowledge, skills, income or religion, the findings indicate that a more profound construct: personality, identity or way of thinking has significant influence on interpersonal relationships and individual perceptions of being similar or different to others. Personality, as a diversity dimension, is constructed in terms of elements such as lifestyle, communication, or openness (extroversion/introversion). The key influence of this dimension is that, on the one hand, perceived personality similarity enhances social integration and relationships at work. On the other hand, however, the perceived personality difference, does not necessarily negatively influence work processes. In sum, besides technology and gender, personality is a perceived diversity dimension that influences workplace relationships. Hence, besides the masculinity of technology and the resulting gendered identity processes, as well as technology related professional hierarchies, which discussed in previous sections of this chapter, this section focussed on a less tangible form of diversity as perceived by individuals. The next section discusses intersectionality of diversity dimensions. To that, it highlights the complex, contextual and individual nature of diversity and identity by investigating individual diversity perceptions through an intersectional lens.

8.3 Intersectionality: Complexity, Individuality, and Contextuality

> *"…maybe that's the baggage I bring into the room, because I feel like I now have to speak for all women and all people of colour." (Alia, Female, Software Designer, UK)*

> "*I believe that being a mum and Egyptian and Muslim and working here with different situations, different people, of different cultures, and having to speak to every one of them about their challenging situations is mind-blowing. It doesn't get me much sleep, honestly, but I wouldn't trade it for any other thing in the world.*" *(Zeina, Female, Manager, Germany)*

Considering intersectionality during data analysis shows that the experience of inequality is as individual and context-specific as diversity and identity. The complexity of diversity experiences and perceptions highlighted by these narratives. To that, this section shows that not only are multiple identities or diversity dimensions causes of inequality simultaneously, but also that there is no mechanism by which these can be disentangled. In most cases, participants could not clearly identify one main source of inequality. As such, the investigation of diversity and intersectionality is a process shaped by complexity. The individuality of diversity perceptions and experiences is shown by the shifting of the centre of inequality among individuals. For instance, while gender and ethnicity are a main source of inequality for one interviewee, age and religion are key factors for another interviewee. Finally, contextuality of diversity and intersectionality are shown in this section. The experience of inequality is context-specific as it is linked to what each diversity dimension relates to in a given culture. For example, whilst women in the technology industry are globally disadvantaged, the first story discussed in this section shows that being a white European woman in Egypt reverses the disadvantages linked to gender, by advantages of being of white ethnicity. Gender is a key pillar of inequality, with almost all the women interviewed narrating how being a woman in tech comes with a set of challenges. Women are stereotyped as too 'feminine' and 'delicate' for the 'tough' and 'complex' work of engineering and technology. This challenge is shared by women regardless of other social identities (age group, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, etc.) they embrace and represent. However, the challenges are magnified the more intersections a woman represents. Whilst to a certain extent some universality can be assumed, no two experiences are identical. Intersectionality is explored from an identity lens, the focus thus being on

interviewee perceptions of how their different 'social identities' construct the challenges they face. Some cases show how age and gender intersectionality increased the experience of inequality. In other cases, gender only caused the lesser of negative experiences, because being white European in a non-European context is a privilege greater than the 'disadvantage' of being a woman. In a third case, being both a woman and non-white were challenges to the extent that the participant stated that she felt the need to hide her age/youth. Intersectionality, thus, shows that despite certain dyads being closely interlinked (for example, age and gender, or race and gender), there is no universally applicable set of diversity dimensions that allow for the prediction of inequality. In the scope of this research, intersectionality was therefore explored individually. This approach comes in line with scholars stressing the necessity not just to study interdependencies between diversity dimensions, but also, to consider the contexts in which these interdependencies exist (e.g. Duncan and Loretto, 2004; Goldberg *et al.*, 2004; Acker, 2006; Hancock, 2007; Griffiths and Moore, 2010). Hence, interdependencies were explored on an individual identity level (the micro level of relational analysis). The following subsection tells the stories of four female interviewees, with the aim of individually exploring their experiences as women in tech. Their stories demonstrate the unique experience of each interviewee, thereby showing the influence of context and their own individual circumstances on their experiences of inequality and the challenges they faced.

8.3.1 The "*Khawaga*": A Story about White Privilege

> *"It probably helps being in an international company as well, then of course with the position you have, you also have some respect coming just from the position." (Tina, Female, Director, Egypt)*

'*Khawaga*' in the Arabic language translates to leader, honourable man, high official, or monarch. In postcolonial Egypt, the term is used to refer to white foreigners, typically European and American, never African or Asian ones. The *'Khawaga Complex'* refers to the perception of white foreigners as innately better than Egyptians, Arabs, and other races. The case of this interviewee – a European female country lead in Egypt – shows that certain contextual factors lessen the disadvantageous influence of gender. Thus the contextuality of diversity and intersectionality is highlighted. The interviewee confirmed that the following factors 'make up' for being female: her managerial position, her age, her ethnicity/nationality

and her organisation's commitment to achieving gender equality. Collectively, these factors mean that she was more accepted in her position than an Egyptian younger woman. Narratives of other women interviewed in Egypt show stronger challenges. The interviewee had had extensive experience in the industry and in her organisation at the global level. Among others, she had worked in the Middle East, the United States, Asia and Europe. With regards to gender issues in these areas, she stated that:

> *"It has been a very male dominated company, and the different markets where I worked have been very male dominated. In Mexico, Latino Macho culture, and same thing in the US, and in France or Italy or wherever (…) I just don't really think it is different from how it has been before and I always feel that somehow you are helped by your position, but it is also about who you are and what you do and how you go in and do your job, and then of course it is always tough and you have to have a thick skin."*

The interviewee's narrative shows that the negative influences of being a woman were successfully navigated through and that many factors, such as her position and 'who she is' supported her in overcoming the masculinity of the industry, thus indicating the individuality of diversity experiences and perceptions, for other female interviewees' accounts differed significantly. The intersectionality of gender and age is well documented by scholars (e.g. Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005; Jyrkinen and Mckie, 2012; Gander, 2014) and was often addressed by interviewees. The average age group of interviewees was 25-34 years. As such, most females stated that being young was a disadvantage that threatened perceived competence. Both younger and older women experience age and gender related discrimination (Gander, 2014), which are both closely related to, and can hardly be disentangled from, race based discrimination (Moore, 2009). In this case, belonging to a privileged race and nationality (white/European) in Egypt, subdues the influence of both gender and age. Additionally, seniority in a managerial position (which naturally comes with greater age) further decreases the influence of gender. Therefore, context – referring to the country/culture, organisation or even managerial level – as well as experience and competency, can significantly influence the experience of inequality. The next story showcases how being an Egyptian young women in a high level managerial position is linked to a set of challenges. In contrast to the narrative related

above, it shows that the consequences of being a young woman were not erased by the achievement of reaching such a position.

8.3.2 "*Young Women Cannot Lead": Age and Gender Intersect*

> *"iiiggghhh, of course; it was two things, I was young – and I am still young – I was younger. Let's put it correctly, I was 25, and I used to manage guys with moustaches as we say, who were 35 and 36." (Dunia, Female, Managing Director, Egypt)*

The intersectionality of age and gender was at the centre of this interviewee's experience as a woman in technology. Being a young female in a technology-oriented position and in a higher leadership position were both highly challenging. Hence, in contrast to the first story discussed above, the high position the interviewee held did not contribute to her perception as competent, thereby reinforcing the individuality of diversity experiences. As illustrated in the above quote, the age and gender composition of the participant's team made her role particularly challenging. Employing younger women in low to midlevel managerial positions or administrative/support functions was accepted and encouraged, especially because organisations adopted this as a strategy to improve their gender balance. The above statement was made by the interviewee as she described a promotion she was given. The interviewee was exceptionally competent as an engineer and thus, was promoted to leadership positions at a young age. She faced resistance in her new position, predominantly because the majority of her team were males who were older than her. In this interviewee's case, hence, her direct context (her team composition), further added to her challenges, which in turn, showcases the contextuality of diversity experiences. The interviewee's experiences might possibly have been different, if her team were younger men, or women (whether of similar or older age).

> *"I would say it was quite challenging for me. Maybe it would have been better, if I had more grey hair by that time, so at least they would have seen me as more experienced, if I was at least a little older maybe than the men in my team, then they might think ok so she is a female, but she might have more experience than I do. So aaaagghh ok, I had to compensate, it wasn't easy of course. To be honest, I had to make some dramatic changes, some of the people I just let go, I couldn't work with them like this." (Dunia, Female, Managing Director, Egypt)*

The participant further stated that a male colleague who got a similar promotion was very well accepted in his role, despite his equally young age. Most women in this study reported that being young and female constituted a challenge. It negatively influenced their perceived competence by others, whilst if they were (or looked) older, they might be viewed as being capable and trustworthy in the job. Intersectionality research has shown that both, women belonging to younger and older age groups, face gender and age based discrimination (Duncan and Loretto, 2004). The majority of studies on gender and age intersectionality have been focused on the experiences of women in different age groups (e.g. Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005; Moore, 2009; Jyrkinen and Mckie, 2012; Gander, 2014). This research, however, shows that in specific cases, such as with the first story above, women in older age groups might be better accepted in their roles and assumed to be more competent.

8.3.3 "*Minority women = diversity checkboxes":* Gender and Race Intersect

> *"It's a bit of a struggle to be heard and to be taken seriously and so I feel like I am more conscious of the diversity card that I wave and how I present myself. I am always the odd one out. Because I carry both; so, I'm both female and non-white and so I'm usually the one who sticks out." (Alia, Female, Software Designer, UK)*

Experiences of women of colour are at the core of intersectionality studies: they not only experience discrimination based on their gender or their race, for they are also subject to a multiplication of the two (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991). This interviewee's story highlights the interplay between gender and ethnicity. The intersections are explored from an identity construction lens, wherein the focus lies on how these women feel about their gender, their age, their ethnic background at work and they how cope with being perceived differently than other majority groups (white European men and women). The above statement comprised the participant's first thoughts on diversity. Her workplace experiences with diversity were centred on her gender, her ethnicity and her age. She discussed her gender and ethnicity almost exclusively as a pair; her sense of identity was founded on both equally. The challenges of being and looking young, were reported as an 'addition' to the gender-ethnicity interplay. She narrated that, "*I do feel more under pressure to present myself in a way, so that I'm taken seriously. I think it was more of an issue when I first started, which was about three years ago.*

I was cautious that I was by far the youngest person in the room and so I needed to act older. I needed to be taken seriously and I was very conscious that I would never tell people my age at work." *(Alia, Female, Software Designer, UK)*. At the core of her struggle was her perception by others as being incompetent. Additionally the contextuality of diversity experiences is showcased, the fact that Alia was the only employee of colour in many situations directly contributed to her experiences and perceptions.

Intersectionality research in the technology industry has found that those belonging to historically discriminated against groups (e.g. non-white, low income, women) are exposed to covert and overt forms of oppression, also being assumed to be less capable than their peers (Kvasny, Trauth and Morgan, 2009). The skills and competencies related to success in IT are complexly rooted in stereotypes of gender-race intersections (Trauth *et al.*, 2012). This creates a dynamic in which men are presumed more competent than women and whites more competent than non-whites. A definitive distinction between race and gender as sources of discrimination is far from easily possible (Charleston *et al.*, 2014). When directly asked whether she ever felt that she was being treated unfairly, the participant stated that:

> "*A couple of times. They're both related to my gender maybe, and my ethnic background; I felt undervalued. Or I didn't feel like I had the power to make myself heard. I had to decide what was the better evil, so I would either push something and be considered this crazy woman, who doesn't know what she is doing, or I would just swallow it and go ahead. I wish I could do the crazy one all the time, but I think that also comes with experience, I'm too early in my career to take these risks*." *(Alia, Female, Software Designer, UK)*

In this described scenario, she was exposed to unfair treatment and undervalued based on gender and ethnicity, with her age preventing her from reacting to the situation accordingly. In addition, the participant stated that being conscious of her gender and femininity, she had to *'manage male egos'* and be mindful of her clothing, communication and friendliness with male colleagues, in order to not be '*misunderstood*'. Overall, the experiences explained by the participant show how subtly inequality can take place and coping with this inequality is a dynamic process, one which can change over time. This story illustrates what intersectionality

translates into at an individual level and in daily life. In particular, the interviewee's story highlights the complexity of diversity and intersectionality experiences by showing that inequality is difficult to ascribe to one particular dimension and indicating how Alia's story was further shaped by her young age. Intersectional identity work has revealed how individuals continuously construct their identities in response to contextual identity threats. Moreover, it has been found that individuals, instead of constructing positive or negative intersections, navigate their power positions and negotiate their identities accordingly (Atewologun, Sealy and Vinnicombe, 2016). The participant's story highlights the uniqueness and individuality of intersectionality identity processes and work.

8.3.4 "*Young Muslim Arab and Woman*": Too many Intersections

> *"There aren't so many Arabs, I am the only one, I am the only girl who wears a head cover [hijab] in the entire office. And we are talking about thousands of people in one place, right?" (Nadiya, Female, Software Developer, UK)*

The previous participant's case focused on gender, ethnicity and age, whilst this one pertains to an Arab Muslim veiled woman Engineer in the UK, thereby adding religion and cultural origins as identity intersections. In her case, the Arab identity was the most dominant one, through which other aspects, such as being a woman and young were filtered. However, Nadiya's story simultaneously showcases the complexity and the contextuality of diversity experiences and perceptions, her experience as a woman in technology is formed based on many intersections. Her cultural origins were, thus, a dominant social identity. For the participant, her Arab identity was constructed in terms of political ideology, gender role and religion. Key processes underlying her identity construction were the need for belongingness and an avoidance of being mainstreamed. When asked how she defined her identity, she stated that: "*I am an Eastern woman who is also sort of a victim of multi-culturalism, but I am not sure if victim is right. There are some good aspects of it. I feel like you just need to be aware of and survive this cultural standardisation, this homogenisation*." *(Nadiya, Female, Software Developer, UK).* The participant repeatedly highlighted the pressure associated with the social groups (Arab, Muslim, young women) she represents in the context of the UK, and how her failures and successes are often being generalised by others to stereotype members of said

groups. She explained that: *"It is a bit stressful. I wear the head scarf; I would like my mistakes to be only my own, but I also like my achievements to represent something else. I have to live with the tax that you'll have to pay, if you mess up you mess up as a 'hijaby' woman." (Nadiya, Female, Software Developer, UK).* Her statements highlight how the Islamic symbol of *hijab* has had a significant influence on her career in the UK, which would not be the case in her home country, an Arab, Muslim-majority one, hence confirming the contextuality of diversity and intersectionality.

Her case, therefore, shows how oppression based on several identity dimensions happens at the individual level, is contextually determined (Mercer *et al.*, 2015; Collins and Bilge, 2016); and respectively shapes identity construction (Garry, 2011). Two key differences to the previous story can be observed. Firstly, the Arab and Muslim identities are contextually more challenging to embrace, which is indicated by narrative differences between the two interviewees. The first interviewee focused on aspects relating directly to her role as a woman in tech, in particular, the perception of her skills and competencies. The second interviewee's narrative revolved around deeper ideological discussions; addressing differences in political ideologies and socio-cultural and religious beliefs. Not only is the experience of intersectional identities contextually shaped, but the cultural images associated with specific identity dimensions further influence individual experiences of inequality. Further describing her experience with religious stereotyping, the participant with this narrative recalled her time as a doctoral candidate in a European country, reporting that:

> "*My supervisor would cook for us for Christmas and he would always cook the meat with wine just to try and trick me and he would always make these jokes about: 'Oh I will turn off the lights and you can have a sip, God won't see you', there was this general 'Oh! You still haven't grown out of the religion illusion', I don't think there is a single time where they just stop." (Nadiya, Female, Software Developer, UK)*

As for the perception of her as a woman, she narrated a further example:

> "*He would pour me a glass of water and say you should drink, because when women get dehydrated they go crazy. Actually, I prefer that he was so open, he was just being himself and I appreciate it. The way he said it, sometimes he made jokes, but in a respectful way and sometimes they had a mean tone to them. The arrogance was real,*

but there was no meanness, it is not like he was trying to hurt me, but he truly thought 'oh you poor girl'". (Nadiya, Female, Software Developer, UK)

To summarise her experience as a Muslim and Arab she highlighted the role of socio-cultural and historical contexts in stereotyping certain social groups: "*Systemically! Of course, there is a system that results in people growing up thinking that 'oh we belong to some progress that hasn't been made in the rest of the world" (Nadiya, Female, Software Developer, UK)*. In short, the participant's insights show a different dynamic of inequality, whereby her Muslim identity is profoundly scarred by the Western context in which she studies and works. The story highlights the contextual nature of intersectionality, with the centre of inequality having shifted towards religion. In contrast to the previous stories, where age, gender and ethnicity were at the centre, the role of religion and cultural background were more dominant in this case.

8.3.5 Intersectionality in Technology

Overall, several intersections of identity dimensions have been addressed, including: gender, age, ethnicity, and religion. The choice of an intra-categorical approach (McCall, 2005), guided this analysis. As such, no pre-established categorisation of dimensions was followed, yet the focus was on women who did not represent the mainstream in their given context., the experience and story of the participants were viewed holistically and embedded in their contexts. Analysis thus focused on their experiences as women, as Arabs, as non-whites, as young females, as females visibly representing a religious or cultural group in a context within which they are considered a minority.

The above stories of intersectionality indicate several aspects. One participant repeatedly referred to her sense of not being taken seriously and associated this with her gender, her ethnicity and her age. Disentangling the influence of each dimension separately is a challenging, possibly unachievable task. The third case, however, could differentiate to an extent, between the challenges she faced as an Arab, and others based on her young age and appearance. The contextual nature of intersectionality, which is a reflection of the contextual nature of diversity and inequality is stressed. In particular, the experiences of the women differed greatly based on the country they worked and lived in. This is primarily because the diversity they represented had different historical meanings, being associated with different power dynamics and hierarchies. In the first example, being a white woman in an Egyptian context erased most stereotypical or discriminatory influence traditionally associated with gender or older age. The privilege is rooted in Egypt's history of colonisation, which creates a socio-cultural perception of the white race (typically the coloniser) as a 'better' or more competent one. Concisely, the stance taken to analyse intersectionality shows that the diversity dimension on which inequality is most centred, shifted based on the cultural context. In sum, the interviewee stories discussed above show the nature of their experiences to be complex, contextual and individual. The individual and contextual nature highlighted in this section reinforce the significance of researching individual diversity perceptions situated in the person's multiple contexts and adopting a relational research approach.

8.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, perceived diversity in relation to identity construction has been investigated. Two forms of identities were considered: social and role identities. The micro level of the relational approach was, thus, explored in terms of what individuals do as an occupation and in terms of who they are in the wider social context. The focus was on how individuals define their personal and professional selves as well as what they consider differences and similarities to others. The findings cast light on the inequality dynamics in the tech industry. Technology and gender have been identified as two interrelated inequality causing factors. Gender dynamics reveal the low representation of women in the industry and in STEM education, the perception of technology as a masculine profession and the consideration of women being too feminine for technology work. These factors have led to the increased hiring of women in managerial positions, which, on the one hand, contradicts the 'ideal manager = male' narrative, yet on the other, creates a power dynamic where men are perceived as the more competent part of the workforce, with women being hired to support and 'nurture' them.

Technology is a key element shaping construction of identity. A person's particular role with regards to technology creates a 'hierarchy of sophistication'. The engineer building the software or installing hardware is perceived to do less sophisticated work than one designing the software or writing its codes. Thus, in addition to the technical/ non-technical role differentiation, technology in itself constitutes a diverse group of roles and respective hierarchies. These findings contribute to the research on invisible diversity dimensions. A novice form of perceived diversity was referred to by the participants as that of thought, personality or mentality. The construct was associated to a person's communication, openness (introversion, extroversion, tolerance of differences), style of humour, and general outlook on life (values). As such, socio-cognitive personalities are perceived as invisible diversity.

Finally, intersectionality was considered by showcasing four interviewee stories, with intersections of race, gender, age, and religion being explored. The narratives revealed how these intersections impacted on the women's experiences in the workplace. Additionally, the contextual nature of the intersections was evidenced. For instance, in the Egyptian context,

usually, being a woman in an upper management position would be a great challenge. However, being a European woman of a more mature age would appear to dampen the negative influence of being female. In a nutshell, the approach taken to consider intersectionality in this research uncovered different layers of how intersectionality functions in different contexts and highlights that the centre of inequality can shift based on the context.

To summarise, technology and gender are key constructs causing inequality and power dynamics in the industry. They are closely linked to individual identity construction, with both social and role identities being influenced by them. A novel form of invisible diversity was explored, namely personality, referring to several socio-cognitive aspects and processes. Intersectionality further highlights the necessity of considering identity and inequality in an individual and contextual manner.

Chapter 9

Discussion and Implications

Introduction to Chapter

By adopting a relational approach to investigate diversity perceptions, the contextuality of diversity has been conceptualised and the research has shown that four layers of context (country, industry, organisation, and identity) influence individual diversity perceptions. This chapter discusses the research findings in light of the initial research questions and summarises the contributions to knowledge of the thesis. The chapter firstly presents theoretical contributions to knowledge, followed by a discussion of the findings in relation to each contextual layer, in particular, in terms of how they enhance the extant literature. Secondly, an extended conceptual framework of diversity perceptions is presented. And finally, the concluding section presents a framework for a relational conceptualisation of diversity perceptions, a reflection on the PhD as a learning journey, limitations and recommendations for future research, followed by a discussion of implications for diversity research and management practices.

9.1 Theoretical Contributions to Knowledge

The uniqueness of this research lies in its perceptual, intersectional, contextual, comparative, and relational approach. This integrative approach addresses several limitations usually associated with diversity research and thereby makes several valuable contributions. The study of perceived diversity reveals diversity strands individuals experience to be salient in their social and professional contexts. Diversity research is typically focused on a limited number of diversity dimensions, which results in a simplistic and generalised view on inequality. The integration of individuals' perceptions and experiences of diversity yields a more complete understanding of how inequality is experienced. Key diversity strands are highlighted which are often overlooked due to the focus on limited aspects of diversity. The exploration of perceived diversity thus contributes to scholarly research conceptualising diversity, specifically dimensional conceptualisations of diversity. This research shows that perceived diversity as a construct is shaped through both visible and invisible dimensions, and that the saliency of dimensions is contextual and individual. The relational approach adopted to study diversity allows the influence of different levels of context to be comprehensively identified. The research shows how experiences and perceptions of diversity are influenced by the context individuals exist within. Specifically, it has been demonstrated how diversity perceptions are configured by four layers of context. At the macro level, a country's culture influences individual diversity discourses and dictates whether and how individuals address diversity

topics. The cultural values, legal system and socio-political dynamics interact to form the environment for diversity, which can be either a positive, welcoming, and favourable environment for diversity, or one that rejects diversity, creating and sustaining inequalities. The meso level includes both the layers of industry and organisation. Industry diversity dynamics and the organisational diversity management approach influence perceptions of and attitudes towards, diversity management. The low level of diversity in the technology industry leads to unique challenges for women and ethnic minority groups. The organisational diversity management, the perceived organisational commitment to diversity management and the effectiveness of its policies influence the extent to which employee needs are fulfilled, hence shaping employee diversity management attitudes. Finally, at the micro level, social identities, role identity and personality influence perceived hierarchies between different professional roles, between men and women, and perceptions of being similar or different to others.

Perceived diversity has been researched as a construct embedded within the systems of a country, an industry, an organisation and an individual's profession. Moreover, these layers of context ultimately shape an individual's diversity perceptions, attitudes and experiences. The research's original contribution to knowledge thus includes the influence of context on individual diversity perceptions, individual diversity attitudes, and individual reactions towards diversity management. the Key contributions for each analytical level are listed below.

Macro National Culture Context:

(1) The contextual nature of individual diversity attitudes and perceptions has been demonstrated by showcasing the influence of national culture on diversity attitudes;

(2) The role of cultural elements such as the value of religion, the legal system as well as societal values and traditions in creating a favourable or an unfavourable environment for diversity has been revealed. The mechanism by which culture shapes diversity is thereby shown;

(3) The contextual experience of gender in the different national cultures has been shown. Thereby, the role of culture in shaping inequality is exemplified.

Meso Industry and Organisational Context:

(4) The nature of the gap between diversity management policies and employee needs has been elicited. Organizations focus on the inclusion of underrepresented groups, while individual needs are shaped by the lack of career progression guidance and work-life balance, and perceptions of discrimination;

(5) Employee perceptions of diversity management were shaped by three dynamics: low fulfilment of employee needs, lack of knowledge about, and lack of trust in diversity management. These elements revealed three distinct reactions: frustration, incomprehension and cynicism.

Micro Individual Identity Context:

(6) The intersectionality of social and professional identity strands has been identified. Three elements pillaring identity construction and power dynamics in technology have been identified, namely: gender, technology, and personality;

(7) The significance of professional group identities and their role in constructing power dynamics and inequality were identified;

(8) Diversity of personality has been identified as an invisible diversity dimension salient for interpersonal relationships and self-categorisation processes;

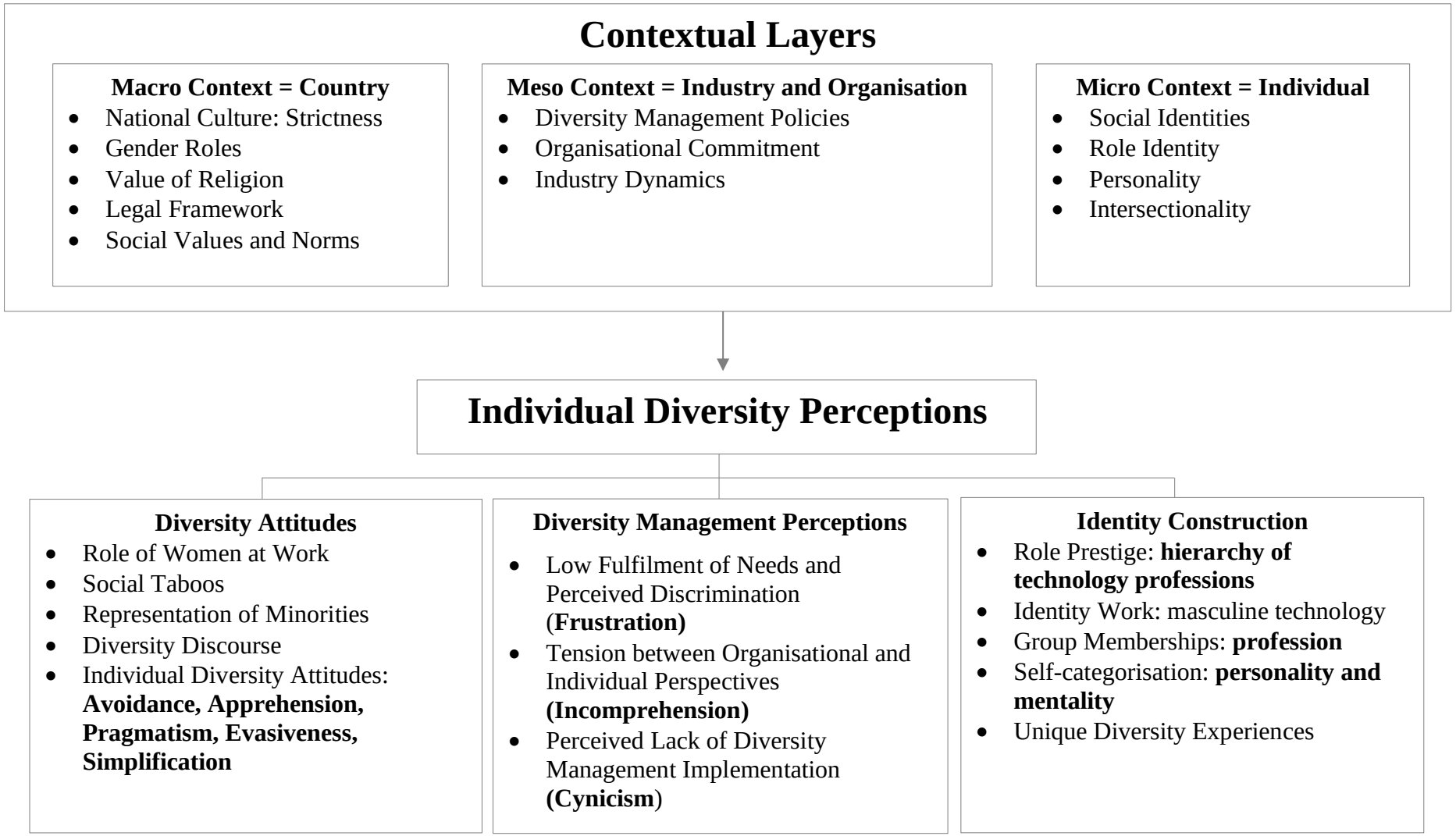
(9) The contextual nature of intersectionality and inequality experiences have been shown by identifying the patterns of how the source and form inequality shift, based on the context.

Thereby, the thesis makes key contributions to diversity, diversity management, culture and intersectionality research. Perceived diversity, referring to the individual perspective of what constitutes diversity, was studied from a relational perspective. Applying a relational approach means that contextual factors are taken into consideration (Nishii and Özbilgin, 2007; Syed and Özbilgin, 2009). This strengthens the research's comparative meaningfulness and highlights how individual diversity perceptions and organisational, industrial and national dynamics are in a state of interplay, which is in line with Özbilgin (2006). Each level of analysis was addressed through a specific lens. To situate diversity perceptions in national culture, the research findings were conceptualised under three perspectives: Hofstede's cultural dimensions, cultural tightness-looseness theory and the world values survey. This was in addition to consideration of the focal countries' history, legal framework and socio-political dynamics. This research, thus, involved answering the calls for contextualised and comparative diversity research. By considering a Middle Eastern and two Western cultures comparatively, the criticised Western ethnocentrism of prior diversity studies has been circumvented. To conceptualise industry and organisational contexts, diversity management literature, in general and diversity in technology, in particular, frame diversity perceptions at the meso level. Diversity management literature has been extended by showcasing employee perceptions of diversity management and their respective attitudes towards it. At the micro level, individual

identity has been considered through social identity theory, role identity and intersectionality. The literature on dimensions of diversity and that exploring diversity through identity processes has been built upon by illustrating the case of the technology industry. In sum, the research has contributed by revealing the salience of context for diversity and its management. The following section is dedicated to a discussion of the research findings at each analytical level.

Figure 8 summarises the findings in terms of the influence of context on the diversity perceptions at each research level. Thus, it shows the conceptualisation of individual diversity perceptions in the technology industry at the three levels of analysis. This is followed by a discussion of each layer and its respective elements. The figure shows which elements of each contextual layer (micro, meso and macro) influence perceptions of diversity and summarises the diversity perceptions at each level. All three levels are interrelated; both the micro and meso levels exist within the macro national culture level and are influenced by it. For instance, the organisational policies are influenced by the country's labour law regulations, which are a part of its legislative framework. Similarly, the representation of and struggles for women in an organisation are a reflection of their socio-cultural roles and the industry gender dynamics (in this case: masculine technology and male-domination of technology roles). Adopting a relational approach means that neither the elements nor levels are to be considered disconnectedly. Instead, contextual factors are perceived as a system of interrelated factors within which diversity perceptions are formed. Hence, the levels of analysed context are presented as one upper level. Diversity perceptions are presented as mediated by each contextual layer. For instance, the gender diversity discourse, social taboos and role of women and minorities is influenced by the national culture and legal system. At the meso level, the degree to which an individual perceives their career related needs as being fulfilled as well as their perceptions of fairness and equality are shaped by the industry dynamics and diversity management policies in place. At the individual level, the construction of own social and role identities as well as intersections between identity strands influence the meaning of diversity a person holds. Accordingly, a person's perception of their professional role's prestige, of being similar or different to others underpins the power dynamics, which in turn, creates hierarchies amongst individuals.

Figure 8: Perceived Diversity in the Technology Industry



Source: Maatwk, 2020

9.2 Influence of National Context on Diversity Perceptions

At the ***macro national level***, the integrative conceptualisation of national culture offers a novice and rigorous approach to contextualisation of diversity research and further contributes to cross-cultural as well as relational research. The research has shown that cultural contexts act as an environment within which diversity and all its related phenomena such as for example, inequality, discrimination, and inclusion exist. Cultural dynamics related to social values and norms and the strength thereof, the role of religion, gender roles, socio-political trends and the country's history, determine whether the environment favours diversity or restricts and suppresses differences. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that these dynamics influence individual's perceptions of and attitudes towards diversity, and thereby shows in-depth the link between macro and micro levels of research. For example, it has been shown that based on the cultural context individuals exist within, the meaning of diversity can be shrunk or reduced to solely include the forms of diversity acceptable in the respective culture, whilst socially controversial diversity aspects are avoided by individuals. Further, the understanding of inequality can be simplified to create a false sense of inclusivity. These dynamics are the result of multiple attributes of the cultural context simultaneously. Consequently, this research forwards the study of culture as a context for diversity.

Previous researchers have suggested that the saliency of diversity dimensions is culturally determined (Shen *et al.,* 2009). This research sheds light on the process and cultural elements constructing this saliency and illustrates the resulting meaning of diversity adopted by individuals. In addition, demonstrating that national culture influences diversity attitudes at an individual level stresses the importance for diversity and diversity management researchers to culturally contextualise research. The macro level analysis highlights the importance of conducting context-specific and comparative diversity research. In line with several other scholars (i.e. Zanoni *et al.*, 2010; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012; Knights and Omanović, 2015), perceived diversity was studied as a construct embedded in the cultural system in terms of structural inequalities, historical power relations and socioeconomic conditions. Diversity as an element of comparative international human resources management perspective is under researched and the prior focus has been predominantly on Western practices (Al Ariss and

Sidani, 2016). Hence, the comparative approach of this research, which has involved exploring Western and non-Western perspectives, has led to the bridging of a gap in diversity scholarship. In particular, in terms of revealing how cultural context governs diversity perceptions across the macro, meso and micro layers. Addressing contextualisation of cultural research, Tsui *et al.* (2007), stress the importance of acknowledging culture as a collective construct that allows individual variations, studying multiple layers of different contexts the phenomena exists within, and ensuring that studied phenomena have an equivalent meaning across studied samples. The relational approach to study diversity across several cultural contexts/countries integrating various theoretical lenses, offers a rigorous approach to address these aspects.

Theoretically, the national culture context is conceptualised by integrating Hofstede's cultural dimensions, cultural tightness looseness theory, the world values survey, cultural values and norms, and the historical, legislative and political contexts of the countries under research. This conceptualisation of culture contributes to scholarly efforts aiming to culturally contextualise research. Previous research has relied upon an integration of multiple theoretical lenses to study diversity embedded in cultural contexts (i.e. Hennekam, and Tahssain-Gay, 2015; Lunnan and Traavik, 2009; Traavik and Adavikolanu, 2016); however, only a limited number of the above listed aspects are typically acknowledged. The integrative approach followed in this research thus offers researchers a comprehensive approach to contextualise culture and makes several significant contributions to diversity as well as culture research. The integrative approach ensures that culture is acknowledged as a complex and multifaceted construct, in which numerous elements are relevant for diversity research. In the following, the key findings are discussed for each country included in the research.

Egyptian National Context: Avoidance and Apprehension

The cultural profile of Egypt presents a tension-filled context for diversity. The strictness of traditions and social values means women are perceived mainly as caretakers, mothers and wives, which impedes gender inclusivity in the workplace. In Egypt's cultural context, deviation from social norms is rarely possible and in fact, is socially sanctioned (Stoermer, Bader and Froese, 2016). The strictness of the Islamic religion and the legislative penalisation of homosexuality (ElGindi, 2017; Leat and El-Kot, 2007), lead to a social tabooisation and avoidance of the topic at an individual level. The World Values Survey characterises Egypt as

traditional and survival orientated (Inglehart and Welzel, 2010). According to Hofstede's dimensions, that nation is considered to be of high-power distance, relatively feminine, uncertainty avoidant and collectivist (Hofstede *et al.,* 2010). These dynamics highlight the importance of religion, obedience to authority, strictly defined gender roles and inflexible social traditions. The Egyptian context, thus, presents a particularly challenging environment in relation to diversity, whereby being different or deviating from socially appropriate behaviour is not accepted and even socially (and sometimes legally) sanctioned. The findings have shown that individual diversity attitudes are coloured by a nationalistic narrative and an invisibilisation of structucal inequalities. Issues surrounding religious and ethnic minorities' marginalisation are, to a great extent, concealed; at individual level, a 'we are all Egyptians' attitude is adopted to gloss over ethnic or religious differences. That is, this nationalistic narrative is instrumentalised by individuals to avoid sensitive issues, such as racial and religious discrimination and marginalisation of these minoriy groups. In terms of diversity priorities, gender was reported as the key priority for organisations, whilst the participants highlighted how LGBT inclusivity cannot be voiced in Egypt. Overall, the Egyptian context restricts the acceptance of differences, which influences individual diversity attitudes. In sum, the the key diversity attitudes in Egypt are ***avoidance*** and ***apprehension*** stemming from nationalism and invisibilisation.

German National Context: Pragmatism and Avoidance

The German cultural profile shows a rational and practical environment for diversty, which leads to pragmatic diversity attitudes on the individual level. The social value of work and the pratcical and rational outlook on life result in equally rationalised practical diversity attitudes. Germany shows a high degree of individualism, low power distance and masculinity (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010). The social norms are loosely defined and thus, deviant behaviour is socially acceptable (Stoermer, Bader and Froese, 2016), whilst autonomy, rationality, self-expression and well-being are important social values (Inglehart and Welzel, 2010; WVS Database, 2013). Regarding diversity and its management, gender is a key focus in Germany, while ethnic diversity is largely ignored (Tatli *et al*., 2012). As abovementioned, the research findings show a pragmatic perception of diversity. Participant diversity narratives were shaped by a managerial 'practical' approach to diversity, such that the meanings of diversity were tied to diversity management practices. The exclusion of racism and ethnic diversity from diversity

discourses is also reflected in the research outcomes. The study findings extend the literature on ethnic diversity in Germany (e.g. Köppel, Yan and Lüdicke, 2007; Constant, Nottmeyer, and Zimmermann, 2011; Tatli *et al.,* 2012), by showing how racism and discrimination against ethnic minorities take place in a subtle invisible manner, thus indicating a dynamic of *'silent racism'*. Accordingly, issues relating to racism are avoided and excluded from individual diversity narratives. At the individual level, the national culture translates into an efficient practical diversity narrative shaped by 'political correctness'. Moreover, qualifications and education are claimed as being the only criteria on which individuals are included or excluded in the workplace. The individual pragmatic diversity narrative is thus a reflection of deeper cultural dynamics in Germany. In sum, German diversity attitudes are identified as ***avoidance*** and ***pragmatism***.

United Kingdom National Context: Evasiveness and Simplification

The United Kingdom cultural context shows, in comparison to Egypt and Germany, a more positive environment for diversity. That is, both diversity and diversity management are an integral part of the social and organisational narratives. According to existing literature, the UK culture shows similarities to the German cultural context, being individualist, with low uncertainty avoidance and high masculinity (Hofstede *et al.,* 2010). A further similarity to Germany is indicated by the looseness of the UK cultural context along with the social emphasis on autonomy and self-expression (WVS Database, 2008). At the individual level, two key diversity attitudes are identified: evasiveness and reductionism. Issues relating to ethnic diversity and class were avoided or only superficially addressed. In fact, the participants often referred to the diversity of nationalities instead ethnic diversity, with the majority of these notably being white Europeans. This comes in accordance with scholars suggesting that the UK diversity discourse is shaped by multiculturalism (Berry, 2016). Yet, despite the 'welcoming' notion towards cultural diversity, at least from a legislative perspective, ethnic and cultural minorities suffer from class inequality and are economically disadvantaged (Tatli *et al.,* 2012). The centrality of gender and LGBT as diversity topics on the national and organisational levels leads to a false sense of inclusivity. Diversity is reduced to gender and sexual orientation, the importance of which organisations constantly communicate and as such this reduced conceptualisation of diversity creates a narrow sense of inclusion, from which many diversity dimensions are excluded. Despite organisational focus on gender and LGBT,

participant narratives indicate a 'checkbox' like approach towards these topics. LGBT identifying individuals experience micro-aggression, lower compensation and fewer career progression chances (Cech and Pham, 2017; Theodorakopoulos and Budhwar, 2015). As sensitive topics are circumvented, the meaning of diversity is reduced to a limited number of strands, which become the focus of diversity management practices and individual diversity perceptions. Hence, UK diversity attitudes of ***evasiveness*** and ***simplification*** are identified.

To emphasise the role of context in shaping the experience of diversity, the context-specific experiences of gender diversity and gender inequality were discussed in-depth. According to participants across Egypt, Germany and the UK, gender was considered the top diversity priority for organisations. However, the nature of gender issues and the challenges faced were found to differ significantly between Egypt, as a Middle Eastern culture and Germany and the UK, as Western ones. Egyptian women's struggles were rooted in their perceived social role as predominantly care givers, mothers and wives. Challenges for women in Germany and the UK were career related. The focus was on low representation of women in the workplace, the perception of their being less 'capable' of technology work than men and the low effectiveness of gender diversity policies. The main issues, hence, revolved around having strong voices at the workplace and the need for women friendly environments. These significantly different experiences of women in Egypt compared to Germany and the UK are rooted in the cultural context in each country and showcase the role of national context in the experience of inequality as an individual. The focus on gender as an example to showcase the contextual perceptions and experiences of diversity serves several purposes. Firstly, gender – along with ethnicity – related inequality triggered the legislative and organisational interest in diversity (Bell, Marquardt and Berry, 2014). Secondly, gender is consistently included in diversity definitions and conceptualisations (Holvino, 2010; Zanoni *et al.*, 2010; Hanappi-Egger and Ortlieb, 2016), and yet discussions on gender equality have only superficially addressed the role of religion, cultural traditions and socio-economic dynamics in shaping gender inequality (Özbilgin, Syed, Ali, and Torunoglu, 2012). Gender was further referred to by all research participants as the key diversity issue in their organisational and cultural contexts and the key diversity management focus. Nonetheless, this research sheds light on the challenges faced by women in technology, despite the various diversity management efforts. Which in turn, indicates that gender equality policies and programs must take the contextual gender

expeirences into consideration. Women quotas, for example, require a different implementation approach in Egypt, than in Germany or the UK, to address the socio-cultural challenges women are faced with. In sum, despite gender inclusivity being a common challenge across cultures, the nature of these challenges and their potential solutions, differed according to the cultural setting and to the factors impeding the career progression of women.

In conclusion, through the comparative and relational approach adopted in this research, the influence of culture on diversity attitudes, perceptions and values has been shown across three countries: Egypt, Germany and the United Kingdom. There are two key ways in which national culture influences diversity perceptions that have been identified. Firstly, the national culture creates an environment for diversity, which can structurally sustain or diminish inequalities. The '*strictness*' of the Egyptian culture and its conservative norms and values, has led to a pattern of sensitive issues being avoided, thus resulting in inequalities being sustained. In Germany, the '*industriousness*' and work-oriented German culture has engendered pragmatic diversity perceptions, and individuals showed a tendency to focus on diversity management instead of issues relating to inequality. The '*multiculturalism*' notion of the diversity discourse and legislation in the United Kingdom initially would seem to imply a diversity welcoming environment. However, at the individual level, diversity has been reduced predominantly to a gender and sexuality focus. This means that structural barriers ethnic minorities face are ignored in the diversity discourse, thus leading to an incomplete form of inclusivity being adopted by individuals. To summarise, the research outcomes at the macro level of analysis contribute to diversity scholarship by showing the influence of national culture on individual diversity attitudes, thereby demonstrating the contextual nature of diversity as a construct and highlighting the essentiality of considering context in diversity research and practice. That is, the national culture influences which diversity topics are acceptable and the extent to which individuals address less acceptable ones. Overall, social gender roles, the role of religion in public and professional life, the legal framework, social values, the role of women at work, social taboos, the integration of minority groups, the social diversity discourse and individual diversity attitudes at the national level all have an impact on diversity outcomes.

9.3 Influence of Industry and Organisational Contexts on Diversity Perceptions

At the ***meso level***, the research findings have revealed the tension between individual experiences and perceptions of diversity and organisational diversity management practices. The tension between the two perspectives, employee perspective and organisational perspective, and the reactions to diversity management identified extend diversity management research. In particular, the integration of employee perspectives in diversity management literature, and the inclusion of employee voices in the design and implementation of diversity management policies are key conclusions drawn from the findings of this research. It is been shown that diversity management perceptions are filtered by four elements: employee needs fulfilment, perceived fairness and equality, awareness of diversity policies and employee trust towards organisations. Individuals' perception of and reaction to diversity management are based on these four elements. Three reactions to diversity management have been identified: ***frustration***, ***incomprehension*** and ***cynicism***. The gap between organisational diversity management foci and employee needs, results in the *frustration* of employees. The vagueness and ambiguity surrounding the implementation of diversity policies, foster *incomprehension* of diversity management on the part of employees. Lastly, Individuals exhibit a *cynical* attitude towards organisational diversity management efforts, which are perceived as 'empty words' and 'diversity checklists'. Below, the elements shaping each reaction and perceptions are discussed.

Diversity perception is shaped by the degree of employee needs fulfilment. The research findings show that ***frustration*** is experienced by employees when their career-related needs are unfulfilled, in terms of: career progression, promotion, maternity policies and/or future career path. Organisational diversity management efforts, on the other hand, are perceived to focus on the representation of specific underrepresented groups. Diversity management is influenced by the tech industry dynamics, which have been, to date, dominated by white males (Kirton *et al.*, 2016). The organisational diversity management focus reflects the diversity dynamics of the industry by considering gender the most important diversity priority. According to employee perceptions, most other forms of diversity (i.e. other than gender, disabilities, and LGBT) are almost entirely disregarded by tech organisations. Diversity discourse plays a key

role in shaping diversity management practices (Tatli, 2011). In case of this research, diversity discourses of individuals were manifested in the *'women in tech'* rhetoric. Gender balance is, consequently, the top communicated priority by organisations. In spite of this focus, the perception of gender initiatives as being ineffective and the perceived ignoring of further individual needs, was found to have generated widespread dissatisfaction amongst employees in many of the focal organisations. The differing foci of diversity management compared to employee needs shed light on the different – if not opposing – perspectives adopted by each. Organisational efforts are in line with a narrow view on diversity management; a view which results in diversity management focusing on affirmative action policies (Subeliani and Tsogas, 2005), which concern strictly defined social groups (Heres and Benschop, 2010). Employee perspectives and needs captured in this research, indicate a broad view on diversity management, which acknowledges various forms of differences among individuals (Subeliani and Tsogas, 2005). This research enriches scholarly efforts addressing the meaning and effectiveness of diversity management by identifying the different definitions of diversity as a factor contributing to the gap between organisations and employees. Consequently, the need for a common understanding of inequality, diversity and the resulting challenges faced by and needs of employees is shown. The lack of consideration of employee perspective has been addressed and criticised by diversity scholars (Otaye-Ebede, 2019; Sabharwal, 2014). This research conforms with this criticism and adds to this stream of research by showing that the tension between employee and organisational perspectives stems from different definitions of diversity and its management.

The research findings show that employees lacked awareness of and concrete information about, diversity management policies and thus, a state of ***incomprehension*** was observed. Awareness of diversity programmes and initiatives among the 'regular employees', who were not human resources or diversity managers, but rather, the subjects of diversity management policies, was almost non-existent. Employees lacked information, such as: who managed diversity, whether any diversity goals were officially tied to compensation, what the organisational diversity priorities were other than gender, disability or LGBT and whether or not any official diversity communication took place (such as annual reports or strategies). The research outcomes indicate that a variety of diversity initiatives are typically implemented by organisations, including: training, mentoring, targeted recruitment and selection,

communication initiatives as well as quotas for hiring women, ethnic or other minorities (Daya, 2014; Janssens and Zanoni, 2014; Sabharwal, 2014; Shore, Cleveland and Sanchez, 2018). Additionally, according to the websites of companies included in this research, diversity management is an integral strategic goal for them. However, participants lacked information about any such initiatives, with the exception of women's quotas, disability quotas and/or raising awareness on LGBT inclusivity. In line with diversity in IT research, despite the implementation of numerous diversity initiatives, the gap between policy and implementation has persisted (Kirton, *et al.*, 2016). The current study has highlighted the lack of information available to employees, which has resulted in doubt being shed on whether policies are appropriately implemented and communicated. Whilst the incomprehensive and disengaged reaction of employees to diversity management is a valuable insight gained from this research, it contributes to diversity management literature by identifying areas that require further attention from both researchers and practitioners. In particular, employees' incomprehension indicates challenges with regards to the implementation and dissemination of diversity management policies. Diversity management is typically anchored in organisational human resources management (Guillaume *et al.*, 2014), and research shows that organisations adopt numerous formal or informal measures to ensure that HR processes such as recruitment, hiring and performance appraisal are inclusive (Manoharan, Sardeshmukh and Gross, 2019). Paradoxically, this research shows that employees are still, to a great extent, uninformed about existing diversity policies or practices, thereby indicating the need for investigating the practical implementation of diversity management.

Finally, the research findings show that many employees adopted a ***cynical*** attitude towards organisations' diversity management in terms of there being a perceived lack of commitment. Organisations regularly communicated the importance of diversity, yet many participants, based on their perceived lack of implementation of diversity management policies, were of the view that organisational commitment was *'talk with no walk'*. This dynamic had resulted in a cynical attitude towards organisational diversity narratives. Diversity management commitment is typically signalled by the organisation through leadership communication and support (Martins and Terblanche, 2003; Pless and Maak, 2004; Randel *et al.*, 2018; Sabharwal, 2014); explicit and official strategic implementation of diversity management policies (Martins and Terblanche, 2003; Pitts, 2006; Kopaneva and Sias, 2015); and the implementation of

diversity management policies, often under the umbrella of human resources management (Daya, 2014; Janssens and Zanoni, 2014; Sabharwal, 2014; Shore, Cleveland and Sanchez, 2018). This research has shown that leadership communication was explicit, yet ineffective, from an individual point of view. Hence, this finding supports literature suggesting that the explicit or implicit commitment to diversity and inclusion does not automatically translate into appropriate diversity management conduct (Ahmed, 2007). In sum, employees perceived diversity management to be a rhetoric organisations were obliged to narrate for compliance purposes and did not pertain to actual commitment to diversity and inclusion.

To conclude, the meso level anaylsis confirms three key dynamics surrounding diversity management: employee-organisation disconnect, vagueness and ambiguity along with employee cynicism. The research has revealed qualitatively individual perceptions of diversity management and brings forth the importance of communication and involvement of employees' perspectives in diversity management processes. Hence, the findings contribute to the literature addressing the effectiveness of diversity management interventions (i.e. Curtis and Dreachslin, 2008; Dobbin and Kalev, 2013; Jones *et al.*, 2013; Nishii, 2017). The contrast between employee needs and organisational diversity narratives is evident through the unfulfilled needs of the former. Employees perceived organisational priorities to be limited to gender and disability in Egypt, with this emphasis being on sexual orientation in the UK and Germany. Employee needs in terms of diversity management relate to class equality, work-life balance and equal access to career development and promotion. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on employee perceptions of and reactions to, diversity management policies in the technology industry. To date, scholarship has increasingly focused on the effectiveness of diversity management initiatives (Yang and Konrad, 2011; Guillaume *et al.*, 2014, 2017; Konrad, Yang and Maurer, 2015), whilst that on employee perception of it is under researched (Otaye-Ebede, 2018). The findings have shown that individuals react in different ways to diversity management policies. Three reactions were elicited from data analysis: frustration, incomprehension and cynicism. The research thus offers a context-specific insight into diversity needs and diversity management perceptions, whilst also uncovering individual reactions to diversity management. Finally, different meanings of diversity has been identified one of the key factors leading to the gap between organisational and employee perspectives, and the necessity to review the practical implementation of diversity policies is showcased.

9.4 Influence of Identity Construction Processes on Diversity Perceptions

At an ***individual micro level***, the contextual and intersectional nature of identities and their influence on diversity perceptions have been revealed, thereby demonstrating the contextual and individually unique experience of diversity. The analysis of identity construction in the technology industry significantly extends research on identities and identity work in organisations. The uniqueness of this research lies in its focus on several key constructs simultaneously: role identities, embedded in an individual's profession, social identities, referring to socio-demographic identity strands, and intersectionality. These three constructs are considered through an integrative approach resulting in a comprehensive conceptualisation of the identity construct, which is explored in relation to several layers of context. To theorise these identity perspectives, social identity theory and role identity theories are adopted. Key contributions are presented through the integration of social and role identities, thereby extending research addressing diversity through an identity lens in general, and in particular, research adopting social identity theory and role identity theory. A key contribution offered by this research is showing that social identities and professional role identities concurrently shape an individual's experience of their identity, and respectively, of diversity and inequality. Traditionally, diversity scholars adopting a social psychology lens rely predominantly on social identity theory (i.e. Hogg et al., 2012; Kulik and Bainbridge, 2006; Williams and O'Reilly, 1998; Van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007), however, this research has shown that both social and professional role identities interplay to create the comprehensive sense of self an individual holds. In addition, intersections between social and professional identities have been shown to be triggers of inequality and stereotyping experienced by individuals. This sections first discusses the contributions made to identity research in organisations, and secondly, the contributions made to intersectionality research are discussed.

The research has shown that ***role identities*** create hierarchies and power dynamics in technology. These hierarchies are created based on an intersection of professional role identities (such as technology) and social identities (such as gender and age). Hence, the necessity for identity research, particularly when considering inequality and diversity, to consider both types of identities is stressed. In addition, the consideration of the intersectionality between social and professional identities is essential to comprehensively

understand individuals' construction of their identities and their experiences of inequality. Particularly in light of criticism directed at social identity theory for oversimplifying identities and overlooking intersectionality, subgroup identities and relationality of the identity construct (Hornsey, 2008), the integration of professional and social identities and their analysis through an intersectional lens advances identity research in organisations. That is, the findings have shown that technology has a dual role in creating hierarchies: the ***elitism*** and ***masculinity*** of technology result in an imbalance of power and a hierarchy of professional roles. The ***elitism*** of technology triggers individuals' need for uniqueness and leads them to identify with technology in such a way that creates a power imbalance. The differentiation between technology design, technology development and technology building played a significant role in identity construction. Regarding which, a hierarchy or ranking of professional identities based on their perceived prestige in descending order was identified as follows: technology designers, technology developer, technology builders, hardware installation professionals and managers. In this context, identity research involves addressing how technology and the 'prestige' associated with it influence role identity construction (Barley and Orr, 1997; Marks and Scholarios, 2007). Moreover, it highlights the significance of certain values and skills, such as problem-solving, learning and communication for engineering professionals (Anderson *et al.*, 2010). The research outcomes build upon the role identity in the technology literature by identifying the hierarchical nature of professional roles. They show that, not only does technology differentiate between technical and non-technical individuals, but also, that within technical roles a differentiation process takes place. The current research extends professional identity research through several aspects. Firstly, research on professional identities often disregards social identities by relying on a meritocracy claim, which deems social identities irrelevant (Cech and Waidzunas, 2011; Hughes, 2017; Tate and Linn, 2005). The identified intersectionality between professional identities and social identities, and the construction of specific professional identities centred on certain demographic (such as 'masculine technology'), show the limitations of the meritocracy approach. The disconnect between social and professional identities thus results in an incomplete conceptualisation of both inequality and diversity. Secondly, the hierarchical structures differentiating professional roles further advances identity research. Identity research in technology has largely focused on engineering identities or identities of individuals holding technology related roles (i.e. Adam *et al*., 2006; Cech, 2015; Faulkner, 2007; Trauth *et al*., 2012). However, the positioning of technology roles

above non-technology roles confirms that professional identities within a given sector can be a basis for power imbalance. The necessity to consider all professional groups within an industry (both specialist and non-specialist groups) to thoroughly conseptualise and understand diversity is identified.

Social identity and professional role identity theories explain how individuals construct their identities based on who they are and on their professional roles respectively (Brown, 2015). This research has shown that not only do both social and role identities significantly influence diversity perceptions, but their influence is interlinked. The consideration of social identities by diversity researchers stems from the role of visible diversity dimensions as basis for stereotyping and prejudice (Harrison *et al.,* 2002; Kulik and Bainbridge, 2006; Mor Barak *et al.,* 2016; Phillips *et al.,* 2006), which can result into group formation and inter-group conflict (Bonache *et al*., 2016). Social identity research is extended in a threefold way. Firstly, it has been demonstrated that individuals construct their sense of self based on numerous identities they hold simultaneously. Secondly, the value and meaningfulness of each identity is context-dependant, and processes of identity work are adapted accordingly. Finally, identities are acknowledged as complex constructs inclusive of intersections of identity strands as well as sub-identities, thereby offering an integrative approach to study identities.

Concerning the nature of identities, Brown (2015), postulates that debates among identity scholars are centred on whether identities are chosen or ascribed, fluid or stable, coherent or fragmented, and whether identities are shaped by a need for positive meaning and authenticity. Researchers agree that whilst individuals are categorised into groups based on meaningful social identities such as gender, age, disability status or religion; the variety of these identities does not allow for a strict categorisation into in and out groups (Brewer, 2012). This research contributes to these debates and by showing that identities are constructed by 'piecing together' different attributes (age, gender, religion, sexuality, etc.), which are in constant shifting based on the individual's context. Meaning, an individual negotiates and constructs their identity based on their status in a social context at a given point of time. Based on the different identities available to the individual, the outcome of their identity work processes can be favourable and result in privilege, or unfavourable and result in discrimination or experience of inequality. Hence, identities can be shaped by a need for authenticity (Brown, 2015), but also by an

avoidance of and distancing from discrimination or inequality. For example, the findings of this research show that women engineers have to navigate their femininity to strengthen their perception as competent in their professional roles, whilst male engineers are not subjected to this dynamic; instead, they are advantaged and generally perceived as more capable. Due to the ***masculine nature*** of technology, women are subjected to two dynamics: they are perceived as less competent technology employees than men, but better managers. Moreover, managerial positions are perceived to exist to 'serve' and 'support' technical ones. The superiority of men over women is thus sustained and gender balance might be achieved, yet only numerically as opposed to actual gender equality. The study of identities in technology has largely focused on the masculinity of technology and how women define their identities in light of the male-dominated industry context (e.g. Adam et al., 2006; Cech, 2015; Cech, Rubineau, Silbey, and Seron, 2011; Faulkner, 2000, 2007; Hatmaker, 2013; Jorgenson, 2002). The study findings have led to the identification of a hidden dynamic by which a false gender equality is created. Hence, research on gendered identity work has been extended by showing that efforts to create gender equality; by disguising existing inequalities, policies can sustain current power imbalances. Specifically, organisational practices aimed at increasing women in technology create a 'false' or alternate balance, whereby the number of women is increased, yet solely by hiring the majority of women in managerial functions. This creates a new hierarchy in that managerial functions are perceived as less significant and women's role – since it is tied to managerial positions – is perceived to be about supporting men. This results in organisational structures, which whilst employing more women, maintain men's superiority and reinforce the former's stereotypical role as 'caretakers'. Furthermore, women's navigation of these challenges (such as 'de-feminising') indicates that identities are more fluid than stable.

The integration of social and professional role identities and their exploration through an intersectional lens and a relational approach, contributes to identity research. Social Identity research is criticised for overlooking dub-identities, intersectionality and the relational nature of the construct of identity (Hornsey, 2008). Additionally, the analytical focus of identity research is predominantly at single level: individual, group or organisation (Ashforth, Rogers, and Corley, 2011). By adopting a relational approach which encompasses macro national culture level, meso industry and organisational levels, and micro individual level, identities have been shown to be constructed in relation to the social and professional dynamics

constituting these contexts. Consequently, the consideration of social identities, professional role identities, intersectionality amongst these, as well as contextual factors (at national, sectoral and organisational levels), that influence them.

Consideration of ***intersectionality*** at the individual level shows the individual and contextual nature of both diversity and identity. The intra-categorical approach adopted, which neither fully adopts nor fully deconstructs categories, allows unveiling the complex lived experiences of individuals who are not members of traditionally constructed groups in a certain context (McCall, 2005). Most significantly, the shifting of the source of inequality based on contextual factors has been shown. Hence, both the relational and contextual nature of intersectionality and identity are key insights gained form this research. The debate surrounding which categories or pairs of categories to include in intersectionality research is ongoing amongst psychology and social psychology scholars (Cole, 2009; Warner, 2008; Warner and Shields, 2013). To that regard, intersectionality scholars are typically divided into these considering intersections of gender and ethnicity (Yuval-Davis, 2016), or scholars addressing other dyads of differences such as sex and race (Graves and Powell, 2008), age and gender (Gander, 2014), or glass, gender and race (Acker, 2006). The context specific analysis of intersectionality adopted in this research contributes to the debate concerning which differences or dyads of diversity dimensions to include. That is, instead of solely relying on dyads considered salient by existing research, it is pivotal to analyse the context within which diversity is embedded and to select categories of differences accordingly. This research has shown that individual's experiences of inequality vary significantly based on the context they exist within, and that their experiences are shaped in relation to who the socially dominant groups (majority groups) are. That is, cultural, social and sectoral/professional contexts serve as guidelines for researchers when engaging with the decision of relevant diversity and identity strands.

The conceptualisation of intersectionality – as instrumentalised by researchers – needs to be expanded beyond considering the intersections of two or three dimensions to acknowledge context and relationality. The relational study of diversity and identity adopting an intersectional lens, enables scholars to make use of intersectionality as an analytical tool, which can be applied to different disciplines and contexts. The analysis regarding intersectionality was focused on those participants who were not considered the 'mainstream' of technology

employees: young women, women of colour, Muslim women in Europe and European women in Egypt. The research findings indicate that experiences with diversity and inequality are individual, contextual and unique. Women in technology faced numerous challenges in all the researched countries. They globally face gender related challenges, however, their context (country, organisation, position, age) strongly influences the nature of these. Intersectionality has been extensively researched and the multiplication of inequalities experienced by non-white women, in particular, has been well documented (e.g. Kvansy et al., 2009; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). The technology industry, in particular, shows complex gender-race intersection inequalities (Trauth *et al.*, 2012). Ethnic minorities are significantly marginalised in the Egyptian cultural context (Janmyr, 2017), whilst non standard religion and sexuality are socially tabooed. As such, the intersection of age and gender is more signifcantly highlighted by women, as other sensitive forms of diversity were avoided. Among the UK and Germany participants, however, ethnicity and religion contributed to the inequality experienced by women. Throughout the data collection process, the diversity of the participants was a key consideration. However, despite having a diverse pool of participants in terms of gender, age, religion, nationality, cultural background and ethnicity, the white male domination of the industry was still evident; ethnic diversity, in particular, was a challenge. This has revealed the individually unique and complex nature of inequality. Intersectionality is thus not addressed from its traditional perspective of focusing on the intersections of specific pre-determined dimensions of identity such as gender and ethnicity. Instead, the theoretical discourse surrounding intersectionality is widened and its application to study social and professional identities paves the way for intersectional research in further disciplines.

Among the research participants, ***personality*** or mentality covered elements. such as: a person being introverted or extroverted, their sense of humour, their leisurely activities and their values or worldviews. That is, the research findings have shown how similarity in terms of personality and mentality can decrease the influence of dissimilarities, thus leading to close relationships between individuals of different gender, age groups, religious beliefs, or ethnic origin. The identification of personality as a diversity dimension addresses contributes to several debates surrounding the nature of the diversity construct. Establishing the significance of personality for workplace relationships shows that the meaning of diversity is individually unique and thereby, experiences of inequality are equally unique. The reliance on diversity

dimensions, the significance of which is pre-established (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012), combined with the heavy focus on gender, age, race, education, tenure and functional background (Van Knippenberg, De Dreu and Homan, 2004; Qin, Muenjohn and Chhetri, 2014), thereby result in an incomplete conceptualisation of diversity. The concept of personality as a diversity dimension requires further research to investigate potential diversity dimensions which intersect with it. The investigation of the extent to which personality refers to individuals' values and worldviews with regards to gender roles, class inequality, or sexuality can further advance research on diversity. Finally, the research on diversity definitions and conceptualisations identifies multiple diversity dimensions and respective categorisations of these dimensions. In particular, diversity dimensions have been categorised based on their visibility (Milliken and Martins, 1996; Harrison *et al.*, 2002; Phillips, Northcraft and Neale, 2006; Mor Barak, Lizano, Kim, Duan, Rhee, *et al.*, 2016), their relatedness to the job (Jackson, May and Whitney, 1995; Pelled, 1996), or their nature in terms of being behavioural, demographic, or cognitive (Hubbard, 2004). Invisible or deep level diversity typically refers to aspects such as education, sexuality, nationality, tenure and professional background (Milliken and Martins, 1996; Harrison *et al.*, 2002; Phillips, Northcraft and Neale, 2006; Mor Barak, Lizano, Kim, Duan, Rhee, *et al.*, 2016). However, the research findings point to a diversity dimension of a deeper nature, which was based on the means by which individuals formed bonds and relationships. That is, the identification of personality and mentality as a diversity element shaping interpersonal relationships and group dynamics is a contribution to diversity research; particularly, research conceptualising diversity in terms of visibility based dimensions.

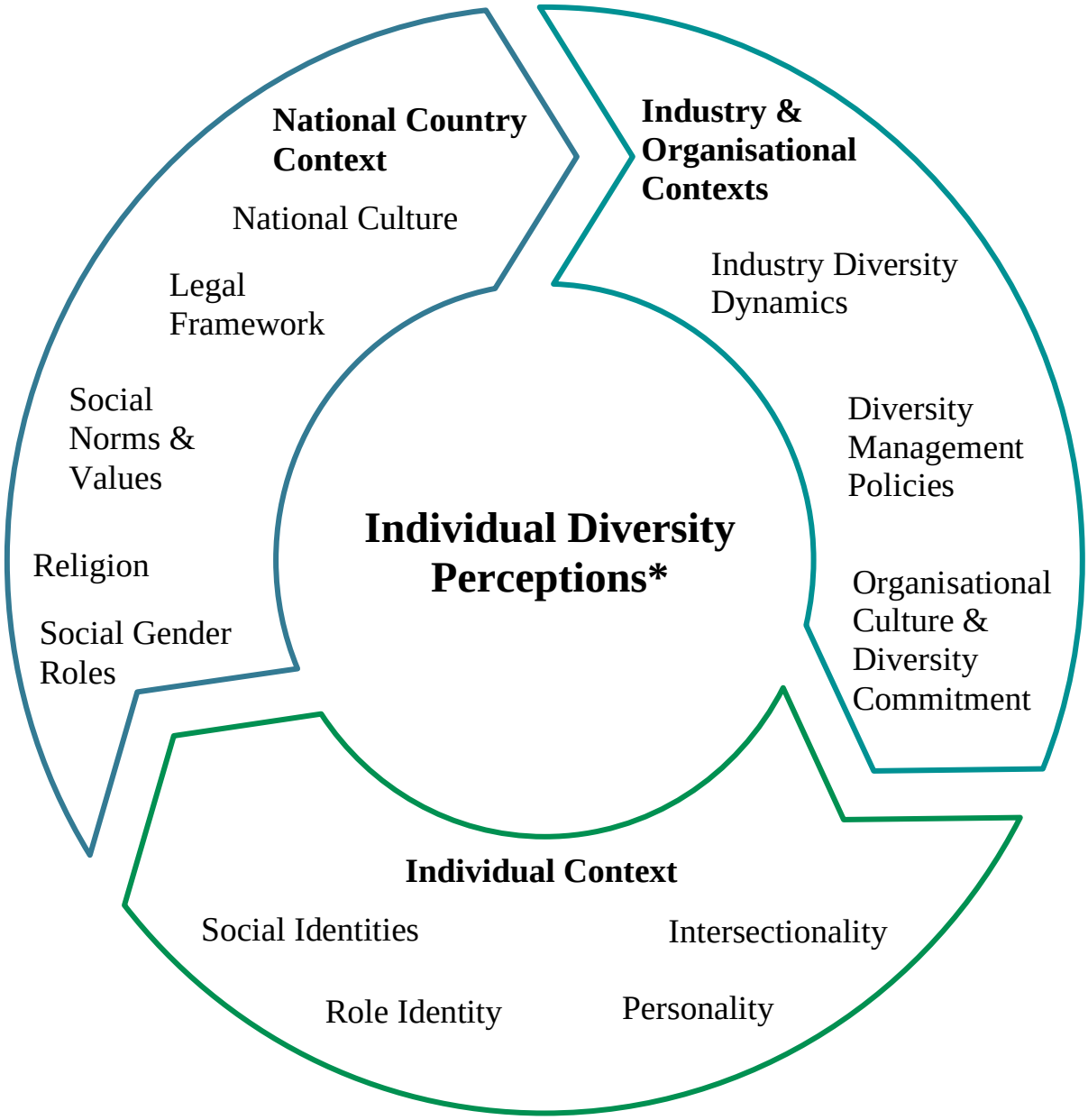
In sum, the micro level analysis simultaneously extends identity research in the technology industry and perceived diversity research. The research identifies that identity and perceived diversity are constructed through individuals' ***role identity*** (i.e. manifested in their profession and work), their ***social identities*** (such as their age, gender, religion, ethnicity, etc.) and ***their personality*** (expressed through their communication, extroversion, humour, lifestyle, etc.). Identity construction within the technology industry is shown to be dominated by: gender, technology, professional background and personality. Technology directly shapes role identities through dynamics of elitism and the masculine nature of technology. Finally, the research findings have revealed the significant influence of intangible diversity, referred to by

some participants as diversity of personality or mentality. Individuals differentiated between tangible aspects of diversity (gender, age, ethnicity, etc.) and the less tangible notion of personalities diversity, which is a key element shaping interpersonal relationships. These aspects shaped identity constrution and self-categorisation, forming the basis for individual perceptions of being similar or different to others. Further, the micro level analysis has revealed the contextual nature of identity. Namely, individuals construct their identities in relation to the social and professional groups they represent. The values and characteristics socially associated with their work influence their own sense of 'who they are'. Individuals and groups a person regularly interacts with and the perceived prestige of these further shape individual identity construction. Collectively, these identity construction processes shaped individuals' diversity perceptions. In conclusion, the integration of social identity theory and professional role identity, the consideration of intersectionality amongst diversity dimensions as well as identity types, the demonstration of the identity work processes unique to a profession, the role of professional groups in constructing inequality, and the saliency of invisible and intangible forms of diversity contribute to diversity, intersectionality and identity research simultaneously.

9.5 A Relational Conceptualisation of Diversity in Context

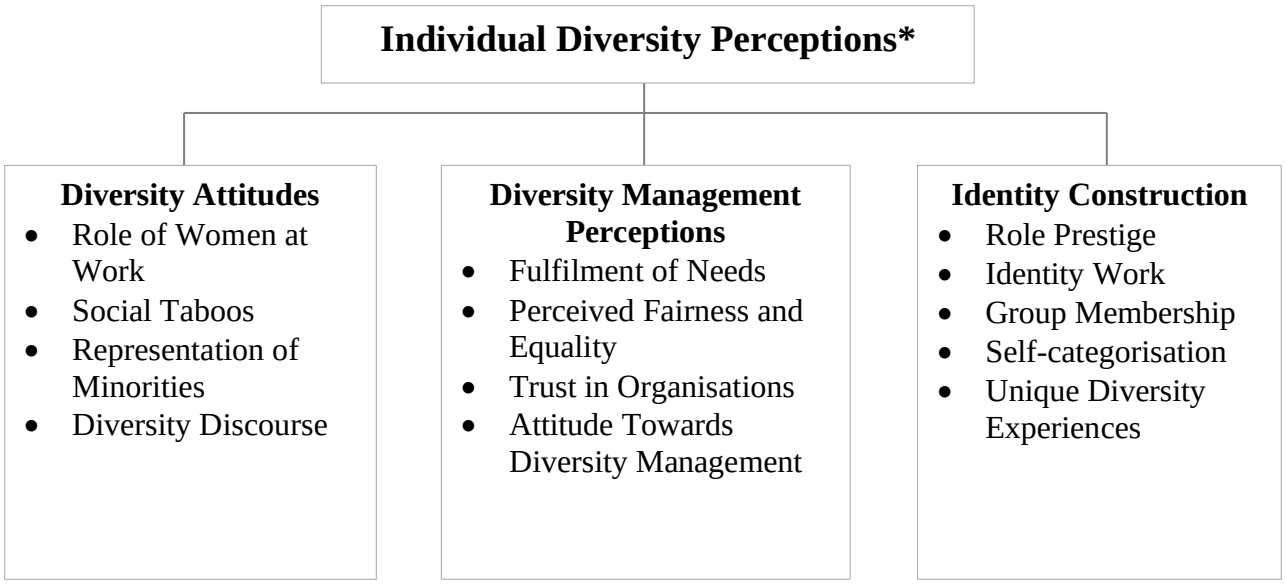
This section introduces the conceptualisation of diversity as part of the several contexts shown to influence it by this research. Individual diversity perceptions have been shown to be a construct embedded within several layers of context and influenced by elements in those layers. Accordingly, this section explains the conceptual contribution made by this thesis. Figure 9 shows the construct of individual diversity perceptions as embedded in three layers of context: individual context, referring to individual identities and personality. The work context pertains to the professional context of the individual, which includes the organisation and the industry an individual belongs to, as well as the diversity management practices the individual is subjected to. The country context encompasses the national culture, the role of religion, the societal gender roles, the social norms and traditions as well as the legal framework the individual lives within. The three layers of context are interconnected, and equally significant for diversity perceptions, and are illustrated accordingly in the below figure.

Figure 9: Conceptual Contribution: Influence of Context on Individual Diversity Perceptions



Source: Maatwk, 2020

Figure 10: Conceptual Contribution: Individual Diversity Perceptions



Source: Maatwk, 2020

Figure 10 above shows the contribution to knowledge made by conceptualising individual diversity perceptions. It shows that individual diversity perceptions are formed through diversity attitudes, diversity management perceptions, and identity construction processes. Diversity attitudes are shaped based on gender related issues, social taboos, minority group issues, and diversity discourses an individual is exposed to. Diversity management perceptions are formed based on the extent to which individual needs are fulfilled, the perceived fairness and equality of opportunities, individuals' trust in their organisation's diversity management efforts, and their reactions and attitudes towards diversity management. Finally, identity construction is based on the individual's role prestigiousness, the identity work an individual goes through, their perceived group memberships (socially and professionally), their self-categorisation as different or similar to others, and the unique diversity experiences they are exposed to.

Diversity perceptions as explored in this research are individual and contextual. They are manifested in the individual's attitude towards diversity and diversity management as well as their own identity definition, both social and role. Diversity perceptions are mediated through three layers of context. Firstly, the national culture context shapes the individual's view on gender issues, their openness to discussing social or religious taboos and their awareness of minority issues. Individual beliefs of what constitutes acceptable diversity is a reflection of how these topics are discoursed culturally. The industry diversity dynamics and the respective organisational diversity practices influence diversity management attitudes. Diversity management attitudes are formed based on the individual's needs fulfilment as well as their awareness of and trust in organisational diversity practices. Finally, diversity perceptions are mediated by the individual level context, which is formed from four elements: social identities, role identity, personality and the intersectionality of identities. Identity influences individuals' construction of diversity as a concept and how they experience it at the workplace. Each contextual level is briefly elaborated upon below.

(1) Country Context

At the macro level, national culture creates an environment for diversity, which can be shaped by equality and openness or it can be subject to a rigid and exclusive environment. The national culture is also the context within which both meso and micro levels are embedded. Aspects of the national culture, such as the role of religion, social gender roles, social values and norms, traditions, socio-economic dynamics and the legal system influence several diversity related issues. In particular, the representation and marginalisation of minority groups, role of women in society and at work, diversity discourses and human resources/diversity management policies are shaped by culture. The marginalisation of minorities and discrimination against women reflect on the workplace and thus on diversity issues in a given industry. The social acceptance of inequality means that organisations can 'easily' sustain these social inequalities internally. The social (national) discourse on diversity therefore influences the organisational diversity and inclusion narratives.

(2) Industry and Organisational Contexts

The industry dynamics directly influence diversity issues. Educational and professional requirements along with the equality of access influence the representation of social groups and minorities, including: women, ethnic minorities and individuals from underprivileged backgrounds. The case of the technology industry is strongly male and white dominated, both which are global trends. This is reflected in internal organisational structures and representation of women and minorities. Organisational culture is a meso level context within which diversity and inclusion dynamics are embedded and in turn, these influence individual experiences. The diversity policies implemented by the organisation influence individual needs relating to career paths as well as perceptions of being valued and fairly treated. These policies are, in turn, shaped by the country's labour law regulations and social acceptance of differences or deviation from social values. Diversity priorities set and communicated by organisations are a result of the industry and culture they operate within, which trigger individual reactions to diversity management. When diversity policies and diversity priorities are consistent, reactions to diversity management can be positive and supportive.

(3) Individual Context

At an individual level, social and role identities shape diversity perceptions. Both identity types influence the process of individuals perceiving themselves as similar to or different from, others. The perceived attractiveness of their roles, is a key element of identity formation and a person's perception of 'prestige' or sophistication in the industry. Social and industry gender roles influence women's identity construction, whilst intersections with other disadvantaged groups cause further challenges for them. The stereotyping of women as unsuitable for a specific profession causes tensions in identity construction and career challenges. Interpersonal relationships and group dynamics are governed by personality diversity. Individuals form in-/out-groups and interpersonal relationships based on their perception of others having similar/different personalities (values, lifestyles and worldviews or ideologies).

9.6 Reflection on the PhD as a Learning Experience

The doctoral research journey was a valuable learning experience, beyond matters relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion. In particular, the field work and research design have provided me valuable insights. This section is dedicated to a critical reflection on the research design and the doctoral journey in general, and I address aspects that I would do differently, based on the experiences gained during the journey. In particular, there are two decisions I would like to reflect upon, the selection of research countries, and the adoption of a qualitative approach.

Research on diversity related phenomena is not only heavily focused on gender and a limited number of other diversity strands, but is also establishing a strong sense of false universalism. The world is often structured as the 'West' and the 'East', and countries or often even continents are grouped and labelled to adopt a 'Middle Eastern' or a 'Western' culture. In my research, two of the cultures I include, would – at first glance – seem very similar. Both Germany and the United Kingdom are Western European countries, that until recently, were both members of the European Union. Hence, both countries were governed by the EU's equality regulations. Adding to this, many diversity strands were equally focused on by my participants in each country. Gender, sexuality, and ethnicity are examples of diversity strands heavily focused on by participants in both countries. Despite the somewhat similar contexts, the experiences of individuals varied. The consideration of race and ethnicity showed that in both countries, racism is a persisting challenge. Nonetheless, in-depth analysis of my participants' experiences with ethnicity, race and racism showed extremely different dynamics in each of Germany and the UK. In Germany, the identified dynamic was one where racism was silenced and the topic was avoided, which highlights the sensitivity of race and racism in Germany. The sensitivity herein stems from the country's history and its role in the world wars. In the UK, on the other hand, racism and ethnicity were not necessarily silenced or excluded from the diversity narrative, rather race and ethnicity were replaced by cultural diversity. Instead of focusing on the whiteness of the technology industry, the focus shifted to be on highlighting the cultural diversity, the fact that this cultural diversity is mainly white European, was mostly, not acknowledged.

I reiterate these insights to make the point, that often, even cultures which might 'seem' to be similar, show different dynamics. The consequence of these differences are crucial for diversity researchers and practitioners alike. The different dynamics underlying equality, diversity and inclusion challenges, mean that different solutions will be necessary to address these challenges. With existing research on diversity and its management in the US as well as many Western European countries, it is possible to identify contextual differences, however, research on equality, diversity and inclusion in the Middle East or the MENA region is critically rare. The Middle East/MENA region is far from homogenous, especially when considering the very different economic, social, and political climates in the region. In hindsight, I would include a second Arab or Middle Eastern country in my research design. So that not only the differences between East and West, as well as the differences between two Western countries is shown, but also the heterogeneity of the Arab world is showcased. Whilst many diversity phenomena are common, such as gender discrimination, the nature of the suppression of women takes different forms, and different levels of 'legalisation' in different countries. Similarly, some Arab cultures are faced with greater tribalism and classism challenges than others.

The selection of the countries included in my doctoral research was shaped, to an extent, by my own 'lived experiences', and how I assessed the accessibility of these cultures for me as a researcher. In hindsight, after the strengthening of my cross-cultural research skills, I would include another Arab culture, even if I have no prior experience in the respective country. From the learning experiences of my doctoral research journey, I would, in hindsight, know how to reach potential research participants in other countries. In addition, despite having lived and worked in all the three countries I include in my research design, theoretically positioning my research was a complex task. The framework I adopt to conceptualise culture is comprehensive and addresses cultural contexts from various perspectives simultaneously; historical and socio-political issues, legislative framework, cultural norms, and the strength thereof, religious values, and social gender roles, to name a few. This framework was the result of a long process throughout the doctoral journey. In hindsight, with the knowledge of how to conceptualise a complex construct such as culture, I would confidently take the decision to expand my research in terms of countries I include.

The second decision I would like to address relates to the choice of a qualitative research approach. In hindsight, I would have used a mixed methods approach. In particular with regards

to meso level analysis; the analysis of reactions to and perceptions of diversity management. Through the semi-structured in-depth interviews, my research offers in-depth insights into employees' perceptions of diversity management. These insights cast unfavourable lights on the organisations' diversity management efforts. My research shows that employees experiences' and awareness of diversity management is critically low. Whilst official organisational rhetoric – in company reports or on websites – paint a very different pictures. It would thus be interesting to explore the extent to which the disengagement from diversity management is applicable to the companies or the industry on wider scale. Qualitative research does not seek generalisation, and it is not claimed in my research. However, showing the generalisability of these perceptions for the industry or organisations can have stronger practical implications. The use of a mixed methods approach at meso level, would have necessitated several changes in the overall research design. In particular, the number of organisations included in the research would be lower, in order to ensure obtaining ethical approval to conduct a companywide survey. This, in turn, means that the overall research approach in terms of ensuring access would need to be adjusted accordingly. In hindsight, I would design the research so that diversity management perceptions data can be collected quantitatively and a degree of generalisability can be established.

Finally, if I would have had the benefit of hindsight at the beginning of my research, I would like to include participants from ethnic minority groups in Egypt in particular. The geographical centralisation of technology firms in Cairo and Alexandria, meant that the employees of these firms are not necessarily representative of the Egyptian society, especially because ethnic minorities are traditionally not properly represented in these two cities. The insights of ethnic minorities from the Bedouins in Sinai, or Nubians in Nubia or the Amazigh would have enriched the research. Establishing a network and ensuring access in the same industry in three countries unfortunately resulted in certain constraints in terms of both time and access. In hindsight, after having established proper networks in the industry, I would actively seek to include ethnic minorities in Egypt.

9.7 Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

The previous section provides a critical reflection on the researcher's learning experiences, showcasing aspects and research design decisions that, with hindsight, she would have tackled differently, in particular with regards to the research design. This section discusses the research limitations and recommendations for future research. Whilst in many aspects, the diversity of research participants was sought and achieved, there remain certain limitations to that regard. In particular, the number of women in technology roles (engineers, coders, scientists) is low compared to men in such functions. Additionally, the representation of BAME interviewees is low compared to other ethnicities; majority of the research participants were of white European or Arab ethnicity, with a fewer number of BAME participants. On the one hand, this is representative of the actual demographic composition of the employees of the technology industry, however it also means that the research can be more inclusive by including these perspective, which are crucial for diversity management practices. Specifically, future research should focus on the experiences of minorities in the industry in order to not produce research which sustains existing inequalities.

Due to financial and geographical constraints, the interviews the UK have been conducted mainly with participants in greater London. Since London is a highly diversified city, the multicultural and multi-ethnic setting ultimately influences diversity perceptions and experiences of participants. As such, individuals residing and working in smaller, less diverse and suburban areas of the UK might have different diversity experiences and perceptions. Similarly, the centralised presence of multinational technology organisations in Cairo and Alexandria, and in light of financial and geographical constraints, has limited the research participants to those living and working in Cairo. The experiences and perceptions of individuals outside these two cities, would be a valuable endeavour for future researchers. Not only because participants' backgrounds would differ in terms of education, financial privilege and living circumstances, but such research would focus on local technology firms. Thus, the meso setting (firm origin, size, and location), and the diversity of interviewees would yield interesting insights, compared to the international and relatively urbanized Cairene setting.

Different professional groups were included in the research, specifically with regards to technical (i.e. engineers, designers, coders) and non-technical functions (i.e. operations, marketing, sales, HR). Since the researcher did not have access to diversity practitioners, and to most interviewees, the team or individual responsible for managing diversity were either unknown or unresponsive, a resulting limitation of the research is that no diversity practitioners were included in the participants. Consequently, future comparative research on the diversity perceptions of diversity practitioners can add valuable insights. Exploration of the different perceptions of diversity managers and/or teams across countries, would, in particular, contribute to the contextualisation of diversity policies. For this research, the diversity management perspective was included by interviewing human resources managers and line managers involved in the hiring of team members. The fact that these interviewees were not considered responsible for diversity management by their organisations adds depth to the research, as it offers a more realistic view on how diversity is 'lived' in organisational processes. A focus solely on diversity managers bears the risk of interviewees trying to present their organisations in a too positive light. Thus, research that explores both the perspectives of diversity practitioners and employees – of the same organisations – can deepen the understanding of the perceived gap between diversity rhetoric and implementation, and can thereby contribute to the design of effective diversity policies and programs.

In addition to the above discussed limitations and respectively the proposed recommendations for future research, individual attitudes towards and perceptions of diversity lay the foundation for essential further exploration. A contextual conceptualisation of individual attitudes towards diversity and diversity management is a key contribution offered by this research. However, a claim of these attitudes' universality is not sought here. Instead, it is acknowledged that individuals in the same country, industry and/or organisation can react differently to diversity. Research on how individual diversity attitudes influence the success or failure of diversity interventions could contribute to bridging the organisational and individual perspectives. Finally, respondents repeatedly referred to personality as a significant factor shaping their perceptions of similarity and difference to others. The construct of personality as a diversity dimension is a new insight gained from this research. An in-depth investigation of personality as a diversity dimension goes beyond the scope of this research, but could be pursued in future study.

9.8 Practical Implications and Concluding Remarks

Conceptually, the thesis contributes to perceived diversity literature by providing evidence on the contextual nature of the concept. The research outcomes demonstrate that diversity perceptions are shaped by different layers of context. The conclusions draw attention to the dynamic and changing nature of diversity. Practically, they imply that diversity management policies, as they currently stand, are insufficient for fulfilling their intended purposes. The research outcomes show the tension between individual and organisational points of view with regards to diversity management. Several shortcomings of diversity management practices have been highlighted and potential solutions put forward. Firstly, the role of employees in the conceptualisation of diversity policies is disregarded to a great extent. Employees are, however, the subjects of diversity policies, which are aimed at creating inclusive structures for them. Hence, the necessity for creating a space for dialogue with employees and to include their perspectives of what constitutes diversity is imperative. Findings on how individuals construct their identities and the resulting meaning of diversity indicate that organisations need to acknowledge its multidimensional nature. The necessity for multidimensional conceptualisations of diversity which are specific to the context of the organisation and its employees is therefore highlighted. Additionally, these findings shed light on the challenges resulting from diversity management being reduced to only specific dimensions; typically gender. Employees' lack of information on diversity management indicates a further challenge. On the part of the organisation, communication on and dissemination of, diversity management policies and initiatives need improvement. The little to no knowledge employees had on diversity policies, indicates either a great problem with their implementation and/or casts doubt on whether diversity management practices were actually being enacted.

In short, both the organisational communication and nature of the topics covered in diversity management show potential for improvement. Specifically, a revised conceptualisation of diversity and inclusion by organisations is necessary. Likewise, managing a wider range of diversity dimensions is essential. In line with recent research on evidence based diversity management, the importance of understanding the organisational context (size, location, sector), obtaining leadership buy-in and support, and basing practices on employee data (Gifford *et al.*, 2019) is acknowledged. This research confirms and extends evidence based

diversity research by identifying the root causes of the tension between employees and organisations. Several key factors contributing to this tension have been identified. The strengths of a qualitative approach lie in the depth and context specific insights. The findings are thus not intended to result in testable hypotheses. That is, they are specific to the technology industry across Egypt, Germany and the United Kingdom. Nonetheless, the key contribution highlighting the significance of the three layers of context is applicable to other industries and countries alike and the conceptual frameworks presented in this chapter are transferable to other national, sectoral, organisational and professional contexts. The design and implementation of diversity management practices requires in-depth consideration of individual identity aspects and the nature of the roles in an organisation. In line with Bacouel-Jentjens and Yang (2019), the research outcomes confirm that to close the gap between diversity management rhetoric and diversity management implementation, the perceptual nature of this gap must be explored. In the context of the organisations included in this research, the over-emphasis on the importance of diversity, without appropriate implementation, is a major factor contributing to the gap.

A further practical implication is offered by the focus on perceived diversity, as opposed to objective diversity, which is often limited to a small number of demographical attributes. Individual level analysis for this research, has shown that individuals rely on more than demographical attributes in their constructions of similarity and differences. Factors, such as personality, education, and nature of professional role, are not reflected in organisational diversity management, despite being pillars of how individuals construct diversity. Diversity management, thus, needs to accommodate the specific meanings of diversity in a given context. In a recent study on the effects of perceived educational diversity, Shemla and Wegge (2019) showed that perceptions of educational diversity moderate diversity related team outcomes and argued that a challenge for diversity is the arbitrary approach to the decision of which diversity aspects are relevant for a given group. This research has shown that relevant aspects of diversity can and should be based on the context of the specific individuals, groups and organisations. This, in turn, relates to the importance of basing diversity management on actual employee data (Gifford *et al.*, 2019).

Overall, this research shows the inadequacy of diversity management policies. The individual reactions to diversity management highlight that current practices are either window-dressing by organisations or their implementation is completely failing. The individual definition and perception of diversity shows a large gap between what organisations 'claim' to manage as diversity (gender, age, ethnicity), and what individuals perceive to differentiate them from others (professions, personality, mentality, and worldviews). The individuality of experiencing inequality further highlights the need for contextualised diversity research and diversity management practices. The influence of the national context on diversity attitudes means that ultimately, diversity management implementation needs to be adapted to the culture it is implemented in. The insights of this research are thus critical of mainstream diversity research and diversity management practices alike. Acknowledging contexts, intersectionality and the individual as a whole is urged for, in order to forward the diversity field in terms of both research and practice.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

The participant information sheet explains the nature of the research project you are kindly invited to be part of. The document informs on aspects such as the purpose of the research, its significance, the duration of the project, and how the information provided will be used. Kindly read through this document in order to take an informed decision of participation.

	Topic	Details
1	**Researcher**	**Fatima Maatwk** Westminster Business School University of Westminster 35 Marylebone Rd, NW1 5LS Email: w1580224@my.westminster.ac.uk
	Title of Thesis	"*Conceptualization of Perceived Diversity in the Technology Industry: A Social Psychology Based, Cross-Cultural Study between Egypt, Germany and the United Kingdom*"
2	**What is the purpose of this research?**	The aim of this research project is to explore how employees of the industry perceive diversity and what they understand under diversity in their working context. The focus herein lies on dimensions of diversity (age, gender, culture, etc.) and identity at the workplace. Thus, the insights of individuals working in international organizations in the ICT industry in Egypt and/or the UK are sought.
3	**What is the research method used?**	The researcher employs qualitative research methods through in-depth, semi-structured interviews.
4	**Why have you been chosen to participate?**	Based on your experience in the telecom/tech industry in Egypt and/or the UK, your insights on diversity in your working context; for instance, your understanding of diversity, your perceptions of diversity initiatives at your workplace, cultural working context and the industry context, are highly valuable for the research project.
5	**What is involved and how long will it take?**	The participants are kindly asked to take part in an interview (for the duration of 1 to 1.5 hours). The interview will take place in a friendly atmosphere at a location of your choice. Throughout the interview, participants are kindly asked to give their insights on various diversity, culture and industry topics. This enables the

		researcher to analyse the nature of diversity in this context, and to explore the workplace dynamics influenced by diversity such as communication and belongingness. All questions asked are related to the participants' personal experiences and observations on diversity; no sensitive or confidential information about the participant or the organization they belong to are sought.
6	**What happens to the information after this interview?**	The information gathered through the interviews is used by the researcher to develop a theoretical conceptualization of diversity in this specific context. The conceptualization aims at giving a thorough explanation of what diversity is and how it shapes processes amongst individuals at the workplace and their identity formation.
7	**What will be done with the results of the study?**	The interview results will be reported in the findings chapter of the final PhD thesis. All participant information will be coded to ensure anonymity of participants; every participant is assigned a numerical code, any individual who reviews the data will only access the codes.
8	**How is the study beneficial and to whom?**	This project will help understand the nature and different dimensions of diversity (age, gender, culture etc.) in this specific industry and how it influences work processes and relationships. The study contributes to efforts of understanding and embracing diversity in today's globalized economy, especially when considering cross-cultural working relationships.
9	**Who has reviewed this study to ensure its compliance to all ethical standards and requirements of the University of Westminster?**	Director of Studies: **Dr Elisabeth Michielsens** Principal Lecturer, Westminster Business School HRM Department, University of Westminster Joint Research Leader – HRM Department Supervisor: **Dr Rebecca Wang** Senior Lecturer, Westminster Business School Leadership and Professional Development Department
	Finally, Kindly Note…	- Your participation is entirely voluntary. - You have the right to withdraw at any point of time without giving a reason. - You have the right to ask for your data to be withdrawn as long as this is practical and for personal information to be destroyed. - You have the right to not answer any question if you do not wish to. - All your responses are confidential and anonymized. No individual will be identifiable through any of the collected data, written reports of the research, or any other publication arising from it.

		- All your personal data will be kept in a safe locker on University of Westminster premises. - The researcher might contact you in the future for clarifications or follow up interviews as the project progresses. - If you are interested, you can receive information on the final results of the research. - The researcher can be contacted after participation by email: w1580224@my.westminster.ac.uk

Appendix 2: Consent Form

Consent Form

Title of the Study: "Visible and Hidden Dimensions of Diversity throughout organizational levels: A Cross-Cultural Analysis"

Researcher: Fatima Maatwk

I have read the information in the Participation Information Sheet, and I am willing to act as a participant in the above research study. The nature and purpose of this research have been sufficiently explained; I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without incurring any consequence.

Participant's Name: ——————————

Signature: —————————— Date: ——————————

This consent form will be stored separately from any data you provide so that your responses remain anonymous.

Appendix 3: Interview Guide

Themes & Topics	*Note: this is a list of preliminary questions, the questions will not necessarily be asked in this exact order & wording. Based on how the study beginning of 2017 went, the order of themes and relevant questions can be different with each interviewee. The interview is dynamic and semi-structured. As such, the course of the interview is organic and the sequence of questions can vary, additional (follow up/clarification) questions can emerge and others might naturally be considered irrelevant.*
Greeting & Introduction	Researcher introduces herself, short bio and educational & research background and interests. Participant gives overview of their educational & professional background.
1. Diversity	
1.1 Personal (conscious) Diversity Understanding	▪ What is the first thing that comes to your mind when I say diversity at: NAME OF FIRM? ▪ What is your understanding of diversity based on your working context? ▪ What do you understand under the concept of inclusion?
1.2 Experiences of Inclusion & Exclusion	▪ What are the factors that make you feel belongingness to the organization and your team respectively? ▪ Can you give me examples of situations where you felt more belonging than usual or you felt excluded? ▪ Can you give me examples of situations where you felt unfairly treated?
1.3 Diversity Management	▪ What kind of diversity initiatives do you know about in your firm? ▪ How does leadership/management of your organization communicate diversity interests? ▪ In your opinion, are there any specific topics in diversity that are (or should be) especially significant to the industry and/or firm? ▪ Would you say diversity is reflected in career progression in the organization, and hiring and promotion processes? How so…? ▪ How would you describe the culture in your organization? ▪ If your organization would have a dept. dedicated to diversity, what kind of work do you think they would/should be doing?

2. Identity	
2.1 Role Identity	▪ What makes you loyal to your team and your organization? ▪ Are there individuals you feel closer to than others? Who & why do you feel this way? ▪ Have you developed friendships with some colleagues? How did they develop and how would you describe the bond/can you describe the form of this friendship? ▪ Do you have someone you consider a professional role model? What makes them a role model to you? ▪ How would you describe your dream workplace? The employer, the people, the work itself… What makes this (what you describe) perfect?
2.2 Teams & Colleagues	▪ How is the atmosphere in your team? ▪ Which similarities and differences do you perceive among your team members? Are there conflicts or challenges that arise from differences or similarities amongst them? ▪ Have you ever faced such conflicts? How do you feel in such situations? And how do you deal with them? ▪ What makes your team successful in dealing with such conflicts? ▪ Do you feel like you are fully included in decision making & communication processes within your team? What you feel/not feel this way? ▪ Can you give me examples of typical miscommunications in the team? Why do you think such situations happen? What could be done to avoid such situations? ▪ Can you describe a typical team meeting?
2.3 Social Identities	▪ Which social groups can you identify within the organization? ▪ Are you aware of any barriers between the social groups or any special bonds (closeness) between certain groups? ▪ Are there any majority and minority groups in the organization? If yes, which ones are you aware of? Can you describe the relationships/differences/similarities between them? ▪ Would you say there are groups of people or individuals who are marginalised? Why do you think they are? What could be done to change their situation?

3. Culture	
3.1 Industry	▪ What makes you excited about working in the industry? ▪ How has working in the industry shaped your own personality/identity? ▪ Do you sometimes feel like changing industries? What are the factors that make you think about leaving/changing?
3.2 Organizational Culture	▪ Can you describe the experience of being a (company name) employee? ▪ What do you like most about working here and what don't you?
3.2 Cross Cultural Working Experience	▪ Do you have any anecdote related to the international aspect of your work; travels, team abroad, etc.…. ▪ Tell me a bit about how it feels working across countries? ▪ From your experience, what are potential challenges with regards to individuals working together across countries on daily basis? ▪ In your opinion, how does the origin of the company influence its work?

Appendix 4: Example of Thematic Analysis Coding

Themes	Sub-Themes
Technology	• Identification with technology - Engineering vs software developers • Software designers - "special departments" - Understand psychology of human needs - Design is more important than building technology • Skills for technology - 'I am an engineer' narrative - Systematic thinking/organised - Process oriented - Working with people - Problem solving • Technology is lucrative industry - Contributes to society - Company CSR - Fast changes in technology - Technology is cool/fast • Stereotype of technology employees - Tech savvy - Geeky - Smart - Tech jargon • Stereotype of sales employees • Women are good managers - Women in HR, Marketing, Admin - Management functions as supporting technology - Women help with booking travel
Masculinity and Women in Tech	• Challenges for women in tech - Women applicants prioritised - Maternity policies - Childcare facilities - Low number of women applicants - Women in managerial roles • Women stereotypes - Fragile - Feminine - Need protection - Women cannot go to engineering sites - Women need office comfort - Air conditioning - Transportation • Family commitments • Safety issues - Commuting - Working on engineering sites • Women's role as wives - Family decides if women are allowed to travel for business - Women's role as mothers - Hiring non-married women • Social restrictions on women - Riding with male colleagues - Working late shits